

RECENT IELTS WRITING TASK 2 TOPICS AND QUESTIONS 2020

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Recent IELTS Writing TASK 2 Topics and Questions 2020

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Academic & General**

July 2020

In some cultures, children are often told that they can achieve anything if they try hard enough.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of giving children this message?

IELTS Cambridge 15 (July)

Some people say that advertising is extremely successful at persuading us to buy things.

Other people think that advertising is so common that we no longer pay attention to it.

Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.

IELTS Cambridge 15 (July)

In the future, nobody will buy printed newspapers or books because they will be able to read everything they want online without paying.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

IELTS Cambridge 15 (July)

In some countries, owning a home rather than renting one is very important for people.

Why might this be the case?

Do you think this is a positive or negative situation?

IELTS Cambridge 15 (July)

June 2020

Full-time university students spend a lot of time studying. Some say they should do other activities too.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported on IELTS June 30th

Some people think that resources should be spent on protecting wild animals, while others think those would be better used for the human population.

Discuss both sides and give your own opinion.

Reported on IELTS June 25th

Some cities create housing for growing populations by building taller buildings while other cities have opted to build on wider areas of land.

Which solution is better?

Reported on IELTS June 23rd

Some feel that countries should produce most of the food that is eaten in their country and import as little as possible.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported on IELTS June 19th

When cars and cyclists use the same roads, there are often problems.

Why is this the case?

What are the solutions?

Reported on IELTS June 16th

Some old people today struggle with the use of modern technologies such as smartphones and computers.

What is the cause of this?

What are some possible solutions?

Reported on IELTS June 11th

In the future, people may have to live on other planets. Some think that is therefore important to spend money researching other planets such as Mars.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported on IELTS June 8th

Research into medical treatments are essential to improve health and fight disease.

Who do you think should fund this research: individuals, private companies or governments?

Reported on IELTS June 6th

Even though doctors advise old people to get more exercise, many old people do not get enough.

What are the reasons for this?

What are some possible solutions for this?

Reported on IELTS June 5th

Some educational systems make students study specialised subjects from the age of fifteen while others require students to study a wide range.

Discuss both sides and give your own opinion.

Reported on IELTS June 2nd

May 2020

Governments should spend more money on medical research and less on researching the environment.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported on IELTS May 30th

Many people think that zoos are cruel. Others think they are helpful in protecting rare animals.

Discuss both sides and give your own opinion.

Reported on IELTS May 29th

Many parents today do not spend much time with their children.

Why is this?

Does this affect parents or children more?

Reported on IELTS May 27th

The increase in the production of consumer goods results in damage to the natural environment.

What are the causes of this?

What can be done to solve this problem?

Reported on IELTS May 22nd

After graduation many students take a year to travel. Some think that it would be more useful to work for a year.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported on IELTS May 18th

Some believe that we should invent a new language for international communication.
Do the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages?

Reported on IELTS May 14th

Many people today are choosing to travel to other countries.
Why is this happening?

Is this a positive or negative development?

Reported on IELTS May 11th

Some feel that it is a waste of time to plan for the future and it is more important to focus on the present.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported on IELTS May 6th

Some think that quality art can be made by anyone while others think that it requires special talent and ability.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Reported on IELTS May 5th

April 2020

Some today argue that schools are no longer necessary because children can learn so much from the internet and be educated at home.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported on IELTS April 29th

In many schools and universities today, women have a tendency to study the humanities (such as the arts and languages) while men more often major in science related subjects. Some believe this tendency should be changed.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported on IELTS April 27th

Some believe that people will purchase a product based on their needs and advertising is not needed.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported on IELTS April 21st

Many people believe that film is a less important art than other forms such as literature and painting.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported on IELTS April 7th

There are severe social consequences to housing shortages in cities and only the government can solve these problems.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported on IELTS April 3rd

March 2020

Watching a live performance such as a play, concert, or sporting event is more enjoyable than watching the same event on television.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported on IELTS March 31st

Some people believe that smartphones are destroying social interaction today.
To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported on IELTS March 29th

Throughout history, male leaders have led us into violence and conflict. If a society is governed by female leaders it will be more peaceful.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

Reported on IELTS March 19th

Some believe that history has little to teach us about today while others think that the study of the past helps us to understand the present.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Reported on IELTS March 17th

More and more students at university today are not choosing to study science.

Why is this happening?

What are the effects of this?

Reported on IELTS March 15th

Many people believe that music is just a form of entertainment, whilst others believe that music has a much larger impact on society today.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Reported on IELTS March 12th

Some people argue that job satisfaction is more important than job security, while others believe that they cannot always expect job satisfaction and a permanent job is more important.

Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.

Reported on IELTS March 7th

Watching TV shows and movies about crime is becoming more and more popular.

Why is this?

What effect does that have on society?

Reported on IELTS March 4th

Some believe technology has made our lives too complex and the solution is to lead a simpler life without technology.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported on IELTS March 3rd

February 2020

In the future it will become more difficult to live on Earth so more money should be spent researching how to live on other planets such as Mars.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported on IELTS February 28th

Some think that ambition is a good quality.

Is it important to be ambitious?

Is it a positive or negative characteristic?

Reported on IELTS February 26th

Online shopping is becoming more common these days.

What effect could this have on the environment and the types of jobs required?

Reported on IELTS February 24th

Some think that governments should support retired people financially while others believe they should take care of themselves.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Reported on IELTS February 23rd

Some believe that people are naturally born as leaders while others feel that leadership skills can develop.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Reported on IELTS February 21st

Some think that governments should tax unhealthy foods to encourage people to eat healthier.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported on IELTS February 20th

Nowadays more tasks at home and work are being performed by robots.

Is this a negative or positive development?

Reported on IELTS February 18th

As well as making money, businesses also have a responsibility towards society.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported on IELTS February 16th

The use of social media is replacing face-to-face interaction among many people in society.

Do you think the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?

Reported on IELTS February 10th

Some believe that tourism does more to create tension between countries rather than helping individuals better understand other cultures.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported on IELTS February 9th

Too much money is wasted on repairing old buildings that should be used to knock them down and build new ones.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported on IELTS February 7th

Plagiarism in academics has become a pressing problem in many countries today.

What are the causes of this problem?

What are some possible solutions?

Reported IELTS Exam on February 5th

Nowadays, entertainers get paid more than politicians.

What are the reasons for this?

Is this a negative or positive development?

Reported IELTS Exam on February 3rd

More and more people today are drinking sugar-based drinks.

What are the reasons for this?

What are the solutions?

Reported IELTS Exam on February 3rd

Many believe that the best way to ensure a happier society is to reduce the difference in income earnings between the rich and poor.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported IELTS Exam on February 1st

January 2020

In some countries, criminal trials are shown on television for the public.

Do the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages?

Reported IELTS Exam on January 30th

Many believe that individuals can do little to improve the environment. Only governments and large companies can make a real difference.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported IELTS Exam on January 28th

Today single-use products are still very common.

What are the problems associated with this?

What are some possible solutions?

Reported IELTS Exam on January 27th

People today generally have better lives than people in the past did.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported IELTS Exam on January 25th

Interviews have always been the most common way to choose among job candidates. Some people now think that there are better ways of finding the right person for a job.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported IELTS Exam on January 24th

Many people feel that students should learn from online materials while others feel that it is better to use printed materials.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Reported IELTS Exam on January 23rd

In order to be successful at a sport, some think you must be physically strong while others believe mental strength is more important.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Reported IELTS Exam on January 22nd

People today increasingly use credit cards to make monthly purchases.

Do the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages?

Reported IELTS Exam on January 21st

Scientific research should be primarily funded by governments instead of commercial companies.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported IELTS Exam on January 20th

Nowadays it is not only large studios that are able to make films. Digital filmmaking now enables anyone to make films.

Do you think this is a positive or negative development?

Reported IELTS Exam on January 18th

Many people have suggested that young adults should undertake a period of unpaid work helping people in their local community.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of this?

Reported IELTS Exam on January 17th

People today spend less and less time interacting with other people in their neighborhood and this has a negative impact on communities.

What are the possible causes and solutions to this problem?

Reported IELTS Exam on January 15th

Because most information about culture and history can be found on the internet today, museums are not necessary.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported IELTS Exam on January 14th

Many feel that happiness is mainly an individual responsibility while others feel that there are important external factors.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Reported IELTS Exam on January 10th

Some believe that spoken communication is always more powerful than written communication.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported IELTS Exam on January 10th

Some people think that paying taxes is their only responsibility towards society while others feel that everyone should do more.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Reported IELTS Exam on January 7th

Some people believe that education is the key to tackling hunger worldwide while others feel that the answer is in food aid.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Reported IELTS Exam on January 3rd

December 2019

Some people think that countries should limit the amount of food that they import and mainly eat products from their own country.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Some people believe that having access to the internet is necessary to live a full life today.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Most agree that we should be training children to recycle waste to preserve the Earth's natural resources. However, some believe that it is parents who should teach their children to recycle waste while others feel schools are more responsible.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Students should be primarily taught academic subjects so that they can pass exams, and practical skills such as cooking should not be taught.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Despite clear warnings from climate scientists, few people are changing their habits.

Why is this the case?

What can be done to encourage people to protect the environment?

Many people think that interviews are not the best way to assess the suitability of a candidate for a position.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Some believe that children should start school after the age of 7 while others think that school should begin from a very young age.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Many feel that technology today is increasing the divide between the wealthy and the poor.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Some people think that the news media has become much more influential in people's lives today and it is a negative development.

Do you agree or disagree?

Many psychologists recommend that the best way to relieve stress is to do nothing at all for a period of time during the day.

Do you agree or disagree?

People today often use the internet to learn about the culture of other countries. This means that it is not that important to travel to those countries.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

The most common solution for criminal behaviour is prison but many believe education is a better method.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

November 2019

Many museums charge for admission while others are free.

Do you think the advantages of charging people for admission to museums outweigh the disadvantages?

Reported November 30th

People have historically attempted to achieve a perfect society. However, it is difficult to decide what an ideal society would be like.

What would be the most important element of a perfect society?

What can normal people do to make society more perfect?

People today often use the internet to learn about the culture of other countries. This means that it is not that important to travel to other countries.
To what extent do you agree or disagree?

At many companies today, applicants are often rejected due to old age.
Do you think this is a positive or a negative development?

Many psychologists recommend that the best way to relieve stress is to do nothing at all for a period of time during the day.
Do you agree or disagree?

Many believe that success in life mainly depends on hard work and determination while others believe that factors like money and personal appearance are important.
Discuss both views and give your opinion.

October 2019

Many people believe that lecture halls have been replaced by online learning.
To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Many people think that museums will be replaced by technology as most information can be found free online. Others believe that museums are still important.
Will museums no longer be needed in the future?
Is this a positive development?

September 2019

Some people believe that universities should only accept students with the highest marks while others believe that some students with low marks should have an opportunity.
Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Some people think women should play an equal role in the police and military while others think women are less suitable for these roles.
Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Rapid population growth in cities has brought with it many problems.
What are these problems?
How can the quality of life of city residents be maintained?

Many scientists believe that seeking out life by sending messages into space is a good idea while others feel that it is dangerous.
Discuss both views and give your opinion.

August 2019

Some people think that it is better to include more public parks and sports facilities in new towns rather than shopping malls.
To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Studies have shown that most criminals have low levels of education. Because of this many believe that the best way to reduce crime is to educate prisoners so they can get a job after being released.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Governments should spend less money on restoring old buildings and more money for new housing and roads development.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

In certain countries, unemployment is so high that some have suggested children should stop their education after primary school to learn skills necessary to join the workforce.

Do you agree or disagree?

In many parts of the world, people look up their family history. Some people think that researching previous generations is a good idea but others think that it is better to be focused on the present and future generations.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Experts claim that if older people do more exercise they will be healthier and happier.

However, many elderly people suffer from a lack of fitness.

What are the causes of this and what are some possible solutions?

These days many people throw away damaged items rather than repairing them.

Why has this change occurred?

What are the effects of this change in attitude?

Some people think that living in a country is essential to learn that country's language and culture.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

July 2019

Much of the food people eat gets transported from farms thousands of miles away. Some believe it would be better for the environment and economy if people only ate food from local farmers.

Would the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages?

The qualities and skills that people require to be successful in today's world cannot be learned at university or at other academic institutions.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

These days, more and more business meetings and business training are taking place online.

Do the advantages of this change outweigh the disadvantages?

Some believe that because everyone needs a place to live, governments should provide houses for those who are too poor to afford their own.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Some people think that sports are needed for society while others think they are just a simple form of recreation.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Many believe that young people should spend more of their free time with their family instead of other entertainment.

Do you agree or disagree?

The media tends to focus on problems rather than positive developments. Some people think that this is harmful to individuals and society.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Many employers are looking for people with good social skills as well as good qualifications. Are social skills as important as qualifications?

How could this be a problem?

June 2019

Many developing countries are expanding their tourist industries.

Why is this?

Is this a positive development?

These days many parents pressure their children to be successful.

What are the reasons for this?

Is this a positive or negative development?

Some educators think international exchange programs would benefit teenagers in High School.

Do the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages?

Earlier developments in technology brought more benefits to change the lives of ordinary people than recent ones do now.

Do you agree or disagree?

More and more people today are buying and driving cars which has a positive impact for the economy but can hurt the environment.

Do the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages?

Machines and robots are increasingly replacing workers in a number of industries.

Do the advantages of this development outweigh the disadvantages?

People from poor rural areas often have difficulty getting into good universities. Therefore, universities should make it easier for these people to be accepted.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Many famous sports players advertise sports products.

Do the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages?

Many are of the opinion that schools should stop using books in favour of videos, films, and computers.

To what extent do you agree?

In many countries, visitors to art galleries has been declining steadily.

What are the reasons for this?

What could be done to improve this development?

Universities should develop methods to support students who come from rural and disadvantageous backgrounds.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Some people think that libraries are a waste of money and resource and computers can largely replace them.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

For people in many countries consumer goods have become an essential part of their lives. Do the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages?

In many countries men and women both work full-time jobs and it is logical that they should share household tasks equally.

Do you agree or disagree?

May 2019

As international travel is becoming cheaper, more and more countries are allowing in more tourists.

Do the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages?

In many countries, people believe secondary schools should aim to provide a general education of a range of subjects. In other countries, students focus on subjects that will be useful for future careers.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Many believe that there should be few restrictions on the office buildings and homes that people can build in cities while others think the designs should be limited.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Some people think that it is important to let children act independently and make their own decisions from an early age.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this?

The amount of advertising that is around us all the time now has a negative impact on people's quality of life.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

People are now living in a "throwaway society" where things are used for a short period of time and then thrown away.

What are the causes of this and what problems does it cause?

Shopping is now one of the most popular forms of leisure activities in many countries for young adults.

Why is this?

Do you think this is a positive or a negative development?

These days many kids spend a lot of their time playing computer games instead of doing sports.

What is the cause of this?

Do you think this is a positive or negative development?

Many people think that television is the best place to get your news while others believe there are better platforms.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Some think that one of the best ways to solve environmental problems is to increase the cost of fuel for cars and other vehicles.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Some people think that the best way of combatting environmental problems is increasing the cost of fuel for cars and similar vehicles.

Do you agree or disagree?

Many think that studying in a group is better than self-study. Others think that it is better to study by yourself.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Many shops today stay open later than in the past and this has an effect on shoppers and the community.

Is this a positive or negative development?

April 2019

Some people think that individuals should be responsible for planning for their retirement while others feel that it is the responsibility of governments to help them.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Many museums and historical sites are not visited by local people.

What are the causes of this and what can be done about it?

Many say manufacturers and supermarkets are responsible for reducing the amount of packaging of products they sell and others say it is the consumers responsibility to stop buying products with too much packaging.

Discuss both views.

In many countries, people can buy a wider range of household goods, such as microwaves, ovens and rice cookers than ever before.

Is this a positive or negative change?

Many people claim that parents should place restrictions on the hours children spend watching TV and playing videogames and encourage them to spend more time reading books.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Many people feel that all teenagers should have to do unpaid work during their free time to help the local community and for the benefit of society as a whole.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Many countries are struggling with increases in crime rates and some think that having more police on the streets is the best way to reduce these increasing levels of crime.

Do you agree or disagree?

Some people think parents should supervise their children's activities, while others believe children should be free to do what they want in their free time.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Today, many people do not realise the importance of the natural world.

Why is this?

How can people be encouraged to learn more about how important the natural world is?

Some people believe that in order to reduce the amount of time people spend commuting, parks and gardens close to city centres should be replaced by apartment buildings. Others disagree with this idea.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Some people believe that it is the responsibility of individuals to take care of the environment while others think this is the responsibility of the government.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Government funding should be used to support sports and the arts in school rather than professional sports and arts for the general public.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

More and more people are becoming seriously overweight. Some people have suggested that governments should increase the cost of unhealthy foods.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

March 2019

In the future there will be more older people than younger people in most countries.

Is this a positive or negative development?

Some people believe that family has the greatest influence on childrens' development while others think that other areas such as television and friends have greater influence.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Scientists have been warning for many years about environmental protection and how important it is to limit our personal energy consumption.

What are the causes of overconsumption of electricity?

How can people be encouraged to use less energy?

Many countries spend a lot of money on improved transport for urban areas while neglecting rural transport.

What are the problems associated with this?

What are some possible solutions?

Some people believe that teenagers should focus on all school subjects while others think that they should concentrate on the subjects where they do the best or find the most interesting.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

The workplace is changing rapidly and many people can no longer rely on having one job their entire life.

Describe the possible causes of this and suggest how this problem can be dealt with.

Some believe that older people make better leaders than young people in companies and organisations.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Some people believe that the increasing number of vehicles is one of the biggest problem facing cities, while others believe that cities have bigger challenges.
Discuss both views and state your opinion.

Some people think that men are naturally more competitive than women.
To what extent do you agree or disagree?

These days, mobile phones and the internet are very important to the ways in which people relate to one another socially.
Do the advantages of this development outweigh the disadvantages?

Scientists believe that in order to protect the environment, people must use less energy in their daily lives. However, most people have not changed the way they live.
Why do you think many people have not taken individual action?
What could be done to encourage them to take action?

Films and computer games which contain violence are very popular. Some people believe they have a negative effect on society and so should be banned. Other people, however, say they are just harmless and help people to relax.
Discuss both these points of view and give your own opinion.

Some people think that higher institutions should concentration more on academic subjects such as history and the physical sciences, while others think that they should concentrate more on practical subjects such as car mechanics and cookery, and so on.
Discuss both views and give your own opinion

February 2019

Around the world, the rich are becoming richer and poor are becoming poorer.
What is the cause of this?
What solutions are there to tackle it?

Economic growth is the best way of ending global poverty but it can also have a negative effect on the environment.
Discuss both sides and give your own opinion.

Many people want to look younger than their real age.
What are the causes of this?
Is this a positive or negative development?

Some think that testing new medicines on animals is necessary while others believe it is not right.
Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Some people prefer to buy international products rather than local ones.
What are the advantages and disadvantages of this?

Films and games can be viewed and played at any time on mobile devices.
Do the advantages of such a development outweigh the disadvantages?

Some people think that the quality of a product drives its sales and advertising is an unnecessary form of entertainment.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Many young people are leaving the countryside to live in cities leaving behind an elderly population.

What are the problems associated with this?

What can be done about it?

Some people think that the government is wasting money by funding the arts and this money could be better spent elsewhere.

To what extent do you agree with this view?

Advances in computer technology allow young adults to work from home and children to study at home.

Do you think this is a positive or negative change?

People today get less sleep than in the past.

What is the cause of this?

What are the possible effects of this development?

Some people think that a good diet and exercise are not necessary to live a long and healthy life.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Some people think that high-end technology can prevent and cut down the crime rate.

Do you agree or disagree?

Some people think that family is the most powerful influence on a child's development while others feel that other factors such as television and friends play a greater role today. Discuss both views and give your opinion.

The main reason that people work hard is to make money.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Over consumption of sugar is unhealthy. Some people think that governments should take the responsibility to control sugar intake while other thing it is the responsibility of individuals.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

January 2019

An increasing number of people are buying what they need online.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of this development?

People live longer today than in the past so they should stay in the workforce longer.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Money ought to be spent on new public buildings such as museums or town halls rather than renovating existing ones.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

All people in a company should be treated equally and provided with the same amount of vacation in a year.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Many people say that a person's success is a result of the way they have been brought up by their parents.

Do you agree or disagree?

Some parents claim that advertisements are misleading for children while others allege that they provide useful information.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Public celebrations (such as national days, festivals etc.) are held in most countries. These are often quite expensive and some people say that governments should spend money on more useful things.

Do you agree or disagree?

Some people say that young people should be encouraged to leave home when they become adults while others claim it would be better to remain with their family.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Some people think that a high salary is the most important factor when choosing a company to work for, while others think that a good working atmosphere is more important.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Parents should take courses in parenting in order to improve the lives of their children.

To what extent do you agree?

More and more people prefer to buy readymade food from restaurants or convenience stores instead of cooking for themselves.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of this?

Some people think that the best way to get the news is through newspapers while others think it is through online media.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Employers should focus on personal qualities instead of qualifications and experience when choosing someone for a job.

To what extent do you agree?

In some cultures, children are often told that they can achieve anything if they try hard enough.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of giving children this message?

Cambridge IELTS 15

In many countries, it is common for children to be told anything is possible if they set their mind to it. In my opinion, this can lead to great achievements, but for the majority engenders feelings of inadequacy.

Some people benefit from a positive emphasis on effort and achievement. The best examples of this come from the United States where famously every child is encouraged to pursue their dreams, no matter how aspirational and unrealistic. Those who succeed serve as role models and evidence the efficacy of pushing children to try to achieve anything. For example, the number of successful entrepreneurs and artists who have left their mark globally from the U.S.A is staggering and includes figures like Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Michael Jackson, Warren Buffet, and Will Smith. These people often give encouraging interviews where they reiterate the importance of having passion and grit to achieve transcendent fame.

However, the cases above are exceptions and considering them the rule only hurts the self-esteem of the general populace. When an individual is told they can accomplish anything through sheer determination and they then fail to become rich and successful, they have no one to blame but themselves. The truth about the connection between effort and achievement is more nuanced than the platitude typically supplied to children. There is a complex interplay between talent, effort, and luck required to produce great achievements and all high-achievers are subject to determining factors beyond simply hard work. Teaching children otherwise sets them up for self-doubt, disillusionment, and delusions of grandeur that will weigh on them throughout adulthood. Hard work is an essential ingredient but supposing it guarantees success will only lead to resentment towards oneself and others.

In conclusion, while teaching children that hard work ensures achievement produces great individuals, overall, it breeds insecurity. Parents ought to instead encourage a positive mindset with less lofty expectations.

Word count: 312

Some people say that advertising is extremely successful at persuading us to buy things. Other people think that advertising is so common that we no longer pay attention to it. Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.

IELTS Cambridge 15

There are those who would argue that advertising has become so pervasive, it hardly has any effect anymore. In my opinion, while people have developed habits to ignore ads, they still achieve their desired effect on the whole.

The main argument against the power of ads is they can be avoided. Online advertising is a good example of this. Users rarely click on or even glance at a website's combination of pop-up ads, banners, mailing list requests, and auto-playing video ads. These have become so common that consumers have developed the unconscious practice of skipping ads on YouTube, quickly closing pop-ups and scrolling past in-page advertising. Advertisers have tried to counter this by making their marketing less conspicuous, as with ads that resemble real posts on social media sites like Instagram, but their sheer frequency means they can be easily identified and do not stand out.

However, despite the best efforts of users, advertisements are still effective. Most people ignore most ads most of the time. This is something that advertisers expect and build into their marketing budgets. These days marketing is the major source of earnings for the largest companies in the world, including Facebook and Google, because of more sophisticated targeted ads. Savvy marketers can sort through demographics and cross-test content for different audiences until they hone in on the most efficient advertising solutions. They can then replicate these ads and invest more money into the well-performing ones, with the financial justification coming from clicks and sales conversions. Advertising today, in reality, is far more effective than at any point in the past because of the raw data available to target potential consumers and the concrete feedback on successful ads.

In conclusion, despite the best efforts of ordinary citizens to circumvent advertising, technological innovations have given marketers more power than ever before. This portends badly for future generations and it is important that lawmakers enact regulations on marketers.

Word count: 320

In the future, nobody will buy printed newspapers or books because they will be able to read everything they want online without paying.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Cambridge IELTS 15

The popularity of physical newspapers and books is in steep decline, nearing irrelevance. In my opinion, although select segments of the population still value books, the move towards free online media is inevitable.

The argument against this is that certain individuals continue to pay for print versions. These tend to be older people and only applies to the most well-known books and newspapers. For example, The New York Times still generates sizeable revenue from subscriptions and is one of the only magazines in the United States currently publishing a daily, physical edition. Moreover, hard copies of books are still popular. The vast majority of middle-aged and older people relish the texture and character of actual books and lack the technological know-how to download E-Books. Even many younger people prefer reading paperbacks and hardcovers to reduce eye strain.

Nonetheless, someday nearly everyone will read solely online. The clearest evidence for this can be seen in the number of publishers resigned to discontinue printing such as The Boston Globe, The Atlantic, and The Independent. Those still in print have seen circulation drop precipitously as individuals access the same news for free, more conveniently on their mobile devices. This same trend is occurring slowly with E-Books due to the rise of Amazon's online platforms. Companies charging for online subscriptions have found their readership is trending towards obsolescence as competitors are willing to post free content and earn profits through targeted advertising. These are entrenched habits for young people and it is only a matter of time until print media disappears entirely.

In conclusion, a rapid decline in publishing cannot be halted as reading habits have changed irrevocably. This means websites will have to become as reliable and responsible as newspapers.

Word count: 287

In some countries, owning a home rather than renting one is very important for people.

Why might this be the case?

Do you think this is a positive or negative situation?

Cambridge IELTS 15

Many people today value owning their own home over renting. In my opinion, this is part of a natural human desire for security and prestige but it contains risks.

The source of this desire is a need for stability and respect. An individual who does not own their own home must pay rent to a landlord. This hangs over them and necessitates maintaining a job with a steady salary and balancing rent against other living expenses. Once a person owns their own home, they are then able to spend their money more freely and consider different employment without the fear of becoming homeless. Moreover, having a home lends an air of respectability. Only the wealthy are able to buy a house and most homeowners take pride in the size and condition of their home as a sign of their social standing.

Nonetheless, home ownership is a negative trend as it forces unrealistic expectations on millions. Most people live in city apartments with rents and are not capable of buying a house. The pressure to buy one is likely to engender feelings of inadequacy and resentment towards the upper classes. This famously fueled the sub-prime mortgage scandals of the early 2000s in the United States when millions borrowed more than they could afford to buy homes, then defaulted on their payments and lost a lifetime of investment. Had these same people opted to rent, they would have saved more money and could have invested in other forms of capital such as the stock market.

In conclusion, owning a home is innately desirable but in the end causes more harm than good due to the pressure it places on individuals. Many people have learned this lesson and home ownership may begin to decline in the future.

Word count: 293

Full-time university students spend a lot of time studying. Some say they should do other activities too.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Some today feel that university students should focus completely on their studies, while others feel it is important to have a diverse range of interests and activities. In my opinion, extracurricular are a key part of the university experience.

Those who advocate students dedicating themselves solely to academics can point out the singular learning opportunity. An undergraduate is typically paying large sums of money, burdening themselves with student debt in most cases, in order to become an expert in a given field. This is the only period in life they will have to study a single, chosen subject without the pressures of work. Freedom from a job allows them to invest fully in academics and learn the theories and skills that will form the basis of their entire professional career. Some would argue that there is little value in diluting this experience by taking on other responsibilities.

Nonetheless, outside activities are also an important element of higher education. There are countless examples of successful individuals who joined a comedy or art club unrelated to their major and later ended up working in that field. Even those who do not receive such tangible rewards from their extracurricular can learn a lot. For example, a student may opt to become involved with a local charity, university initiative or work a part-time job. These will all be formative experiences and may be more memorable and useful for them than the subject they study. Many graduates today switch career paths soon after university regardless, so the respective value of these other activities will increase as they look back on their college experience and recognize what was truly instrumental in their development.

In conclusion, though university is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to focus on a single subject, I believe finding activities outside the classroom also has value. Students should prioritise academics but not ignore the full breadth of learning experiences on offer.

Word count: 316

Some people think that resources should be spent on protecting wild animals, while others think those would be better used for the human population.

Discuss both sides and give your own opinion.

Real Past IELTS Exam

There are many who doubt the logic of spending money and time on wild animals when there are so many humans in need. In my opinion, the valid reasons to prioritise humanity do not outweigh the fact that animals more desperately require refuge.

Those who advocate for less aid for animals believe that human life is inherently more valuable. Humans are capable of higher reasoning skills, have more emotionally complex lives, and most importantly, we share a primary obligation to members of our own species. A good example of this would be when humans and animals come into conflict. Recently, a boy fell into a gorilla cage at a zoo and the wild animal was killed to protect the child. There was a large public outcry but only extremists would argue the human should die in such situations. Increased funding for wildlife in effect means reduced resources allocated to charities for the underprivileged and the implicit elevation of animals over humans.

However, the risk to wild animals is pressing and justifies responsible action. Despite the vulnerability of particular humans, nothing imperils humanity as a whole. This is not the case for endangered animals like bald eagles, cheetahs, lions, and polar bears. They face threats ranging from the impact of climate change to deforestation to poaching. Those are all a direct result of human activity. Without our help, there is a very real chance that some species on the brink will go extinct in the coming decades. Once they have gone extinct, there will be no way to bring them back and this is the existential threat that ought to compel continued funding for programs aimed at wildlife conservation.

In conclusion, though human life is more valuable, the danger looming for at-risk animals is greater and validates compassionate effort. The longer we neglect animals, the greater the chances of extinction.

Word count: 309

Some cities create housing for growing populations by building taller buildings while other cities have opted to build on wider areas of land.

Which solution is better?

Real Past IELTS Exam

Many cities today are expanding upwards to accommodate surging urban populations. In my opinion, this can help preserve nearby land for other uses and is a better solution than encouraging urban sprawl.

Some would argue that tall cities present challenges for inhabitants and a spread-out city offers better quality of life. Condensed urban areas with lots of tall apartment blocks, like in New York City or Shanghai, are famously difficult to live in due to the effects of overcrowding on sanitation, safety, and traffic conditions. In contrast, decentralised cities like Los Angeles and Nashville allow for the development of unique individual neighborhoods, more space for residential construction and a reduction of the urban issues listed above. Individuals living in these cities often report greater feelings of satisfaction and many 'transplants' move to such cities because of the better living standards.

However, those in favour of taller buildings can logically point out the resultant benefits for the area around a city. It is often hard to check the growth of economically important cities and that can lead to massive urban sprawl, as is in the case around Mexico City and Tokyo. By building more skyscrapers, the surrounding area can be preserved or used in another way. Pristine natural lands can be designated as national parks. If the city requires more food to feed its population, there could be proximately located farms with fast delivery times. This surplus land could also be turned into quiet suburban towns to give residents the choice of raising a family outside the city and still earning a good wage and having easy access to the cultural benefits of large metropolises.

In conclusion, horizontal cities facilitate some positive living conditions but taller cities make more sense in the modern world. It is, nonetheless, important to strike a balance and mitigate the issues caused by growing urban populations with quality infrastructure.

Word count: 313

Some feel that countries should produce most of the food that is eaten in their country and import as little as possible.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Real Past IELTS Exam

Many today are increasingly of the opinion that countries should be self-sufficient in their food production and import as little as possible. Though I grant this is unrealistic in certain countries, the economic implications are convincing.

In most countries, imported foods are simply a luxury but this belies those nations where imports ensure survival. Some of these countries include populous Southeast Asian nations, and numerous Middle Eastern and African countries. The reasons range from poorly developed infrastructure, little arable soil, and increased vulnerability to natural disasters. Many Asian countries in particular, import and stockpile basic foods such as rice for potential catastrophes. As agricultural technology develops and allows for crops that require less water, their desperation will lessen but it would be inhumane today to starve citizens in these countries.

The above-mentioned scenarios are exceptions; the majority of countries would be better served through vibrant food cultivation and production industries. The economic impact is twofold. First, these industries employ thousands of agricultural and meat-packing workers. Secondly, these workers then contribute to the local economy by buying goods and services. Replace them with international food conglomerates and suddenly they are funding the GDP of another country. A good counter-example to this would be in South Korea where the vast majority of products are nationally produced and, in fact, were some of the initial, primary sources of income for technology giants like Samsung and LG.

In conclusion, except in extreme cases, countries should import fewer food products to better serve their citizenry economically. There will always be a place for a limited range of imports but it should not supersede local production.

Word count: 270

When cars and cyclists use the same roads, there are often problems.

Why is this the case?

What are the solutions?

Real Past IELTS Exam

Many issues arise when cyclists and motorists occupy the same streets. In my opinion, this is typically the fault of the former and the solutions all relate to better urban planning.

When cyclists and motorists come into conflict on roads it is often because the cyclist has a warped sense of priority. The general rule of thumb is that when cars have the right of way, they possess the option of yielding to cyclists. Otherwise, since cars travel much more quickly than bicycles, the cyclist must allow the car to pass by first so that roads do not become congested. Unfortunately, many people on bicycles attempt to travel as fast as cars without the maneuverability, safety, or breaking ability of cars. The result is that cars and cyclists are often at odds and wary of each other or, in extreme situations, collisions may result.

The solutions to ease these road conflicts are to better plan cities and wait for automobiles and cyclists to adapt to each other. A good example of this would be some European cities like Amsterdam where there is a large percentage of people traveling by bicycle. Urban planners have created bike lanes and altered roadways to mitigate potential conflicts. Over time, with clearer rules of engagement and better urban planning, instances of road rage and disagreement have declined. Adding bike lanes is only part of the solution; it is key for planners to develop innovative solutions for roundabouts, traffic lights, and bridges that allow for a seamless flow of traffic minus the veiled aggression that typically defines the car and bicycle relationship.

In conclusion, cars and bikes are in opposition because cyclists have overestimated their mode of travel and these issues can be remedied through better urban planning. Implementing these solutions is advisable since biking is such an environmental boon.

Word count: 304

Some old people today struggle with the use of modern technologies such as smartphones and computers.

What is the cause of this?

What are some possible solutions?

Real Past IELTS Exam

Many older people today have difficulty acclimating to new technology. The main cause of this is the novel nature of the computer revolution and the best solutions involve education.

The elderly have trouble catching up with new developments in technology because computers and the internet are fundamentally novel. Computers require a skill set that is completely foreign to individuals who did not grow up in the last 30 years. To use a computer, one must be able to type, set up online accounts, remember passwords, troubleshoot IT problems and navigate both the internet and various internet-based apps. For those born into the internet era, this is all second nature but for others the learning curve is often too steep. The simple process of turning on a computer and locating programs using an unfamiliar interface can be overwhelming and serves as the principle, initial barrier.

The best solutions for this relate to education. Older people who are still working require special training programs and patience from their employers and themselves. Competence is likely given detailed instructions and enough time to practice. Moreover, many retired older people want to spend more time with their children, grandchildren and old friends but it can be difficult to travel, particularly if they live far apart. Old people would be extremely motivated to make video calls and stay in touch with loved ones with applications like Skype, Facetime and Facebook Messenger. Through simple instructions from family members, it is possible video-conferencing could become a routine task.

In conclusion, old people today often cannot understand technology because it is a seismic shift in perspective and the solutions involve patient training at work and home. In this way, the benefits of technology can be extended to a generation that missed out on them in their youth.

Word count: 298

***In the future, people may have to live on other planets. Some think that it is therefore important to spend money researching other planets such as Mars.
To what extent do you agree or disagree?***

Real Past IELTS Exam/Test

It is becoming increasingly likely that humanity will have to someday resort to the colonisation of other planets. Though some suggest that we should divert important resources towards research of other planets now, I believe it is more pragmatic to focus on our current planet.

Advocates of increased funding for interplanetary research hold that leaving Earth is inevitable. This conclusion is underpinned by studies showing the potentially irreversible and undoubtedly catastrophic effects of climate change. So far the habitats devastated have belonged to remote polar regions and the fragile ecosystems of already vulnerable animals. Climate scientists believe this degradation will rapidly extend to the lives of ordinary people and result in a global scarcity of natural resources and more intense natural disasters. If these predictions are accurate then we need a backup plan involving the evacuation of Earth to ensure human survival and prosperity for future generations.

However, the best safeguard against the doomsday scenarios laid out above is to salvage the planet we currently inhabit. It would require an immense amount of time, money, and resources to colonise even the nearest neighbor to Earth, Mars. Instead of directing those energies towards a fantastical plan to terraform an alien planet, the easier option is to invest more in protecting Earth's environment. Governments could enact stricter regulations on individuals and private companies to cut carbon emissions, while also funding clean energy initiatives. By collectively signing the numerous international accords, policymakers could strike a balance between economic development and environmental conservation. These solutions are both more realistic in terms of the sacrifices entailed and have a much better chance of actual success.

In conclusion, investing in colonising other planets should not be a priority when there are better solutions to current global problems. Interplanetary dreams should be left to private companies or wealthy individuals who are passionate about humanity's future in space.

Word count: 310

***Research into medical treatments are essential to improve health and fight disease.
Who do you think should fund this research: individuals, private companies or
governments?***

Real Past IELTS Exam

It is indisputably important for researchers to develop new medical treatments in the battle against poor health and disease. In my opinion, this research should be funded primarily by governments and well-regulated private companies.

Governments are able to concentrate solely on public interests. They are indebted to tax-payers and have a responsibility to direct that money back into various services benefitting the nation at large. A good example of the important role governments play in medical services and treatments is the theory of disease originated by Louis Pasteur while working for the publicly funded University of Lille in France. It is unlikely he would have had the time or resources to conduct his experiments on his own and questionable if a private company would have recognised the commercial value of his work. Government funding functions much the same way today to fund medical projects without a clear path to profits but enormous importance for public health.

However, governments are notoriously slow-moving, under-funded and less innovative than private corporations. Companies are motivated to generate a profit, which pushes them to compete, innovate, and pay for the best minds in the field. Evidence for this is numerous and includes advances in surgical procedures, stem cell therapy, nutrition, pharmaceuticals, cancer research, and emergency medicine. Government funded projects and hospitals have a tendency to become complacent while private companies must innovate to excel. The risk, naturally, is that these companies will charge exorbitant costs and reserve the best medicine for select, wealthy clientele. Government regulation is therefore needed to keep these corporations in check.

In conclusion, the government plays a key role in medical research both as a creative body and a regulator. Private companies should not be vilified for their exploitation of health problems but they should be kept within clear limits.

Word count: 299

Even though doctors advise old people to get more exercise, many old people do not get enough.

What are the reasons for this?

What are some possible solutions for this?

Real Past IELTS Exam

Many elderly people today, despite recommendations from doctors, do not get adequate exercise. I believe this is largely related to their upbringing and simple psychology, while the best solutions augment existing remedies.

The most basic sources of this problem are historical and psychological. Many old people today grew up in a period when exercise was not ubiquitous. Gyms in schools and as private businesses are a more recent development so they have not become ingrained habits for past generations. Moreover, men may have experience playing a sport but female athletics were historically underfunded and even banned in many nations, which has an effect on elderly women in particular. This history intermingles with normal human psychology. People are naturally embarrassed to stand out or appear foolish in public. Feeling self-conscious is an initial barrier that prevents many elderly from taking up a new sport or going to the gym for the first time.

The most efficacious solutions involve better accommodating the elderly. One way to do this would be to build more parks for exercise. In some East Asian countries such as Vietnam and South Korea, they have been building both small and large, rural and urban parks with basic exercise equipment for decades. They are easy to use, common and the elderly have become acclimated to them. Many more elderly would exercise if there was an expansion and replication of these successful policies. Another related fix would be to build more fitness centres. This may not have a huge impact at the moment, because gym members tend to be younger, but as a new generation of old people rises up, these centres will become more important and allow governments to take a proactive, rather than reactive, approach.

In conclusion, there are both historic and fundamentally human reasons for why old people do not exercise today. In my opinion, the solutions are not novel but would clearly lead to improved health for the elderly.

Word count: 323

Some educational systems make students study specialised subjects from the age of fifteen while others require students to study a wide range.

Discuss both sides and give your own opinion.

Real Past IELTS Exam

Many educational reformers today incline towards a narrower curriculum for students 15 and older. In my opinion, while this is part of a decidedly modern movement for early specialisation, a wide range of knowledge serves as a basis for more well-adjusted adults.

Limiting subjects from the age of 15 onwards can allow for greater focus. It is not uncommon for many children to choose one musical instrument or participate in a single sport from the beginning of grade school. The rationale is that more time spent in one domain inevitably leads to mastery and this is supported by research into the importance of practice for elite performers. There are many famous examples of individuals who focused from their teenage years onwards and found success such as The Beatles' band members with music and Steve Jobs with computer technology. Fewer subjects after age 15 is therefore one way to safeguard a child's future.

However, the famous examples above are belied by the bulk of research that shows, for the majority of individuals, a wide range of skills and interests is a better predictor of future success. Studies have overwhelmingly shown that varied skills allow for increased creativity and a more even temperament. The average high school student must study obviously useful subjects such as math and various disciplines of science but also take music, art, home economics, and choose their own electives. They may never become professional musicians but opening up that side of their brain can help them be more creative in another field and feel their education is well-rounded. Without dabbling in these allegedly useless subjects they might feel harnessed to a single career and purpose, unable to exercise autonomy over their own life.

In conclusion, studying a range of subjects after the age of 15 leads to better results in general. A complete syllabus furnishes happier individual citizens and contributes to a richer overall society.

Word count: 317

Governments should spend more money on medical research and less on researching the environment.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Many believe governments today should prioritise funding for medicine over environmental studies. In my opinion, learning more about the environment is one way to inform policy regarding climate change but more money should be directed towards medical research.

Those advocating for increased focus on the environment are eager to understand and counter the effects of climate change. There is arguably no greater threat facing the future of human civilisation than a degrading natural world. At the moment, billions are being poured into studies to understand how fast the polar ice caps are melting, what the impact will be, the damage to ecosystems, the interrelation between humans and these delicate ecosystems as well as the role of fossil fuels in aggravating climate change. There are wildly different theories about all these areas and some think the best utilisation of research grants is to give scientists free rein to study and collaborate in the hope of coming to a stronger consensus, which can then shape international accords and domestic policy decisions.

Despite the force of the above argument, I believe health is a more tangible and pressing concern. There is constant disagreement from climate scientists and it is unclear if increased funding would be a remedy or injury. Health research is unequivocally positive. Some of the many advances in health from the last several decades include increased understanding of mental illness, less invasive procedures for surgery, better vaccines, and countless new iterations of advanced medical equipment. These are all put into practice immediately and save or better lives in every country around the world. More money for research now would open up possibilities for new medical innovations that could involve experimentation with genetic modification and greater understanding of disease prevention.

In conclusion, making sense of climate change is important but nothing is more essential than one's health. Governments ought to find ways to balance these competing interests but also be mindful of what most benefits their present citizenry.

Word count: 326

Many people think that zoos are cruel. Others think they are helpful in protecting rare animals.

Discuss both sides and give your own opinion.

Real Past IELTS Exam

Some concerned groups feel that zoos are cruelly exploitative while others argue they serve the vital function of protecting endangered animals. In my opinion, though zoos are inherently unnatural, their efforts are laudable overall.

Those activists who decry the existence of zoos often point out how animals live in the wild. A lion in the African Serengeti, one of the few remaining preserves for lions in their natural habitat, roams over miles of grassland, hunts for meals and competes with rival prides. This is how lions have lived for thousands of years and is the natural byproduct of a generational process of evolution. The same lion placed in a zoo paces a small cage, is tossed already dead meat to eat, and rarely has other lions to interact or mate with. The evidence for zoos as a cruel institution lies in the contrasting of a natural and unnatural lifestyle and turning proud beasts into scavengers.

Regardless, zoos are essential for the preservation and cultivation of endangered species. There are countless animals ranging from various big cats (lions, tigers, leopards, and other sub-species), to pandas, rhinoceros, gorillas, pangolins and many more that depend on zoos for protection and safe breeding grounds. These animals have been driven to the brink of extinction either by loss of habitat due to rampant development and climate change or hunted for their fur or alleged medicinal properties. Responsible zoos are tasked with breeding them in order to stabilise falling populations and then re-introducing them into the wild. Without these zoos, many species would likely already have gone extinct.

In conclusion, zoos are fundamentally artificial but also a net positive because of their conservation efforts. To ensure this remains the case, these refuges must be well-regulated and governments should enact complementary solutions such as anti-poaching laws.

Word count: 299

Many parents today do not spend much time with their children.

Why is this?

Does this affect parents or children more?

Real Past IELTS Exam

These days it is becoming increasingly common for parents to spend less and less time with their children. In my opinion, this is because of some distinctly modern distractions and has a far greater effect on children.

Both parents and children are vulnerable to today's consumer electronics. In the past, parents and children might have been distracted by television or a good book but they were also likely to play a board game together or go for a walk. This started to change with the advent of the internet and portable devices. Many children only care about using their phone or tablet to play games or watch Netflix. Parents are similarly addicted to games, entertainment and the allure of social media. This inclination towards passive entertainment persists even when taking their children out because though parents are physically present, phones often demand most of their attention.

This primarily impacts children as they are more impressionable. Research has shown that the majority of an individual's personality and habits are formed early in life. If a parent neglects a child in favour of their own desires then they are likely to either act out seeking attention or withdraw into their own shell. The child in question might lack not only the supportive and unconditional love that is essential for a healthy upbringing, but also assume and repeat the negative behaviours of their role models. Many children overcompensate for their parent's implicit rejection by numbing themselves by retreating into books, television, YouTube, social media or whatever will give them the attention they crave. This long-cultivated trauma can even follow them throughout adulthood.

In conclusion, the growth of consumer electronics is the source of parental neglect and it mainly impairs the mental health of children. Parents must take it on themselves today to find ways to counter the injurious implications of trading their children's well-being for a sustained glance at a screen.

Word count: 318

The increase in the production of consumer goods results in damage to the natural environment.

What are the causes of this?

What can be done to solve this problem?

Real Past IELTS Exam

The increasing desire for consumer goods today has accelerated industrial production and this poses a threat to the environment. This essay will delineate the reasons for this and also propose solutions for these concomitant environmental risks.

Environmental degradation due to the production of consumer goods can be traced back to governmental shortcomings. Competition between countries makes it nearly impossible to agree on a cohesive global policy. There are attempts, like the recent Paris accords, but many powerful countries, chiefly the United States and China, fear losing their competitive advantages and are unwilling to sign over their autonomy. Developing countries also feel that protecting the environment handicaps them and is a lower priority than rising standards of living. This is coupled with the rise of corporate lobbying groups and corruption in governments around the world. Powerful companies can fund studies for bills that support their efforts to ramp up production and downplay the environmental costs.

The environmental implications of a consumer economy can be mitigated through an array of strict governmental regulations. The best examples of these laws come from environmentally conscious nations in Europe. The European Union has signed every global accord put before them and are making great strides in enforcing among its constituent members the agreed upon limits set forth in these charters. These include allowing countries to buy carbon credits, banning plastic bags and controlling the disposal of toxic waste. There are also more proactive solutions that entail encouraging renewable energies such as solar and wind power. The rest of the world can learn from these European reforms how to wean themselves off an unhealthy dependence on the fossil fuels that underpin consumerism.

In conclusion, government is to blame for the impact of a consumer economy on the environment and they also hold the keys to averting future catastrophe. However, it is unlikely governments will opt to act until the situation is already beyond a tipping point.

Word count: 320

After graduation many students take a year to travel. Some think that it would be more useful to work for a year.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Real Past IELTS Exam

It is very common for privileged students from developed nations to take a year for travel between the end of high school and beginning of university in lieu of working part-time. In my opinion, it is much better to develop your capacity for leisure activity rather than getting a job in this interim period.

The main reason many advocate employment during a gap year is the cultivation of a strong work ethic. When someone begins working, their bad habits necessarily subside. For example, a worker has to be on time, work diligently, follow orders, get along with co-workers, show initiative, have a positive attitude, endure long days, and make ends meet with little pay. This is the molding process of adulthood which entails reconciling your personal desires with the expectations of the community at large. The individual who opts to spend their gap year working, will enter university more well-rounded, disciplined, and humble.

However, a strong work ethic is bound to develop later while the ability to enjoy one's leisure while traveling is a far more valuable skill. Most people acclimate to work with a part-time job during high school or in university. At worst, they develop these qualities after graduation. Since they have been either working or studying their entire lives they have neglected the ability to enjoy leisure that distinguishes higher classes. The average person who has been working their entire life goes on holiday or retires and feels restless. To enjoy your leisure time traveling you must be able to set aside future worries, live in the moment, get outside your comfort zone, have a wide range of hobbies and skills, and be active for a full day without a workday. Chances to cultivate these habits will see far less light with a career and family so it is best to nourish them before university.

In conclusion, the gap year is a crucial space for individuals to develop a personal relationship to their leisure time. This is important as an ever-advancing career can become an undesirable transformational experience.

Word count: 341

Some believe that we should invent a new language for international communication. Do the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages?

Real Past IELTS Exam

There have been recent calls for the implementation of a novel language to facilitate global communication. In my opinion, though this would make for a more level playing field economically, it is impractical.

Those who support an international language rely on its economic advantages. The salient argument is that it would remove barriers to success currently in place. English is close to a universal language at the moment and those born in English-speaking countries have a clear headstart while those from non-English countries, who cannot afford private instruction, begin life at a disadvantage. A new language would reset these disparities. An added advantage of minimising the value of English would be that developing countries could integrate more deeply with the global market and be better able to extend services, entertainment and products to a wider audience.

However, the disadvantages of this proposal all relate to its feasibility. In an ideal world, we would have a global language but for the time and money required. The best evidence of this is the progress of the world's current dominant language, English. Countries all around the world pour money and time into funding English education but the majority of the world still cannot attain mastery. A new language would be even more difficult not only because everyone in the world would have to learn it but also because there would be little incentive if you can already communicate with your compatriots and English allows you to talk to a large segment of the world population. The money and time resources required are staggering, unrealistic, and would be detrimental to both individuals and society.

In conclusion, the drawbacks to an international language far outweigh any perceived gains. Instead, countries should continue to fund English education in the hopes of establishing it as a *lingua franca*.

Word count: 301

Many people today are choosing to travel to other countries.

Why is this happening?

Is this a positive or negative development?

Real Past IELTS Exam

More and more people today are choosing to travel internationally. This positive development is mainly because of a rise in middle class income coupled with advances in aviation.

People today can afford to travel as it has become more convenient. The last half century has seen wages in both developed and developing countries climb with the concomitant expansion of the global middle class. Workers have the disposable income to travel that they lacked in the past. This has been complemented with safer airplanes so individuals are not afraid to fly. Airfares have also become cheaper as companies like Boeing produce more efficient planes, competition intensifies between competing airlines, and the supply more than meets demand for flights. These factors combined have spawned a golden age of international travel.

Looking at the opportunity in perspective, it is hard to see the advent of international travel as anything less than one of mankind's greatest achievements. For the entirety of human history, most people lived and died near to where they were born. Anyone who wanted to travel to another country had to possess enormous wealth, time, and courage. Today, the average employee can save up and travel to see the wonders of the Renaissance in Southern Europe, the vast monuments to history and modernity in China, or explore any other corner of Earth that has piqued their interest. This is an unprecedented opportunity unavailable to past generations.

In conclusion, international travel is a byproduct of the modern age and we should all be grateful for its possibility. There are clear environmental drawbacks but those should not blind people to its benefits taken as a whole.

Word count: 273

Some feel that it is a waste of time to plan for the future and it is more important to focus on the present.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Real Past IELTS Exam

There is growing sentiment today that making plans for the future can take one out of the present moment. Although it is important to have some general future goals, individuals ought to prioritise right now.

The clear advantage of having goals is that they dictate and align your actions. A good counter-example to support this comes from aimless individuals without any fixed aspirations. It is not uncommon for recent university graduates to feel lost and drift from job to job. This can be a rewarding experience but if it continues too long then one will likely remain in low-paying positions and fall behind one's peers. A clear goal can motivate a decision on long-term vocation and force one to put in the hard work required to excel.

Despite the general advantages of having some long-term goals listed above, obsessing over the future can impair connection with the present. There are many famous literary examples of this that reveal underlying tensions between capitalist striving and individual contentment, such as in the famous novel *Babbitt* by Sinclair Lewis. The titular character Babbitt has spent most of his life looking to the future and accomplishing middle class goals. He grows dissatisfied with this life because he no longer feels a vibrant connection to the present moment and his true feelings. His suspension of his deepest desires to meet extrinsic goals set by society alienates him from the present. This is commonly referred to as a mid-life crisis and is very common among driven individuals who reach a pinnacle of success.

In conclusion, emphasis on future goals is one source of modern unhappiness. Individuals must carefully select their goals to distinguish between the life they want and the life they are expected to want.

Word count: 290

Some think that quality art can be made by anyone while others think that it requires special talent and ability.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Real IELTS Exam/Test

Some believe that art ought to be left to talented professionals while others believe anyone can make worthwhile pieces. In my opinion, talent is a complex concept but its lack of clarity does not make it any less crucial.

Talent, particularly in a subjective field such as art, is indefinable. It is impossible to determine the interplay between talent and genetic predisposition, upbringing, personal qualities like perseverance, motivation, luck, and practice. Research into sports has shown the importance of genetics but that is largely because of the athletic requirements. Good hand eye coordination, superior spatial sense, and linguistic prowess may give one a talent advantage in the arts but many technically skilled artists produce lifeless, unoriginal art. There are simply too many unknowns as to what informs talent and how this translates to subjective works to make a definitive appraisal of its value.

However, let us make no mistake: talent is important for all human endeavours and art is no exception. The term itself may be hazy but there is no doubt in practice that certain individuals can create stirring masterpieces and others cannot, regardless of how much hard work they put in. A good example of this would be in music. Some bands and artists toil away for years without making much of an impression while others, like the Beatles and Mozart, were successful from a very young age. John Lennon and Paul McCartney's lyrical gifts and understanding of melody were present for them in their early 20s and few other individuals, professional or amateur, in their entire lifetime have had the talent to reach their heights.

In conclusion, though it is difficult to define, good art requires talent. There is therapeutic value for amateurs but great art with universal appeal is the prerogative of the gifted.

Word count: 298

Some today argue that schools are no longer necessary because children can learn so much from the internet and be educated at home.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Real Past IELTS Exam/Test

There are some today who would argue that the internet has sufficiently supplanted the role of traditional education so as to make it redundant. In my opinion, though the internet opens up possibilities for learning, schools are a crucial filter.

What separates the internet from how other advances in technology have impacted education is greater accessibility to information. It is no exaggeration to claim that nearly everything can be found on the internet. School age children can access educational videos on YouTube, read online articles and use interactive learning platforms. As they get older, the possibilities expand and include scholarly articles, video-conferencing platforms like Zoom, and online newspapers from every country in the world that can be translated to your native language in modern internet browsers. There is immense potential for autodidacts and parents who choose to homeschool.

Nonetheless, schools are the real world editors of the internet. A lot of news is thrown up instantly and not carefully vetted. This means that students can get led into dark corners such as alt-left and right websites that specialise in sensationalised propaganda. Children and teens are especially susceptible to what they read online as they might be less skeptical. Teachers have more life experience and their training helps them approach information critically. They can then pass these skills on to their pupils by teaching them how to read closely, spot biases, and check information through a number of primary and secondary sources. Without teachers, students are more likely to be indoctrinated rather than educated.

In conclusion, teachers are important to dispel the inherent risks of unreliable online information. Schools and administrators ought to take a long-view in order to assess the value of the internet for learning.

Word count: 286

In many schools and universities today, women have a tendency to study the humanities (such as the arts and languages) while men more often major in science related subjects. Some believe this tendency should be changed. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Real Past IELTS Test/Exam

Today more and more parents and policymakers are concerned with the disproportionate ratio of males studying science relative to females. In my opinion, though there are likely social factors at play here that need addressing, there is little value enforcing this change.

The main reason that many are striving to remedy this imbalance is because they feel it is societal, not natural. For centuries, women have subjugated their careers and education to male siblings and husbands. This has led to a history of mostly male role models in scientific pursuits, with women like Mary Shelly and Frida more likely to shine in the arts. Even today, there is a widespread bias that men are better at science that may discourage girls. There have been a number of famous studies cataloging the gender imbalance in science, with most researchers attributing this to social, rather than genetic, factors.

Nonetheless, heavy-handed efforts to force change are detrimental to both men and women. Women who are helped or strongly encouraged to pursue science rather than the arts will be less self-reliant and more likely to develop self-esteem problems. A corollary example would be the failure of affirmative action to promote racial equality. Individuals prosper when societal barriers to success are removed and they are given the opportunity to help themselves. If overly strong measures are taken, such as a quota of female majors in a given subject, that might place less qualified candidates above more deserving ones and then later manifest itself in reduced self-confidence from the unfairly elevated and resentment from those who were passed over.

In conclusion, though I am in favour of all reforms to provide for equal educational opportunity for the sexes, attempts to reform a tendency rather than allow for its change will bring about more harm than good. Rather, parents and educators should encourage students to pursue their passions.

Word count: 311

Some believe that people will purchase a product based on their needs and advertising is not needed.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Many have argued that advertisement serves no real purpose as necessity motivates all purchases. I disagree with this completely because ads give consumers a minimum guarantee of quality and also develop wants into needs.

First of all, advertising is the most direct way to inform customers of a given product's quality. The content of the ad is less important than the fact they were able to produce, distribute and, oftentimes, get a celebrity endorsement. For example, KFC typically signs the most famous football players to massive sponsorship deals, thereby evidencing the continued relevance and quality of their food. When a lesser known company premieres an advertisement this is evidence that they are generating enough revenue to validate whatever product they sell or service they provide.

Secondly, advertising does not simply meet needs; it creates them. Most people could live more fulfilling lives with fewer products but advertising stimulates desires by appealing to consumer psychology and those initial wants eventually become habitual. A good example of this would be the rise of Apple products in the last two decades and the role of advertising in making them popular. Apple phones and computers are famed not only for their quality but also the sense of being part of a community of users. Stylish ads like the 'think different' campaign helped foster their dominance. Now the desire to become part of the Apple community and appear cool has become a basic need for many users hooked into the Apple ecosystem of high-quality consumer electronics.

In conclusion, advertising serves an important role in society. This does not mean that it should not be regulated, simply that consumers and officials should be mindful of the full contribution of advertisers.

Word count: 284

Many people believe that film is a less important art than other forms such as literature and painting.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Real Past IELTS Exam/Test

Film is often looked down on as a less important art form in comparison with more elevated mediums like painting and literature. In my opinion, though the blatant commercialisation of film often undermines its claim to be art at all, it is a clearly more important art form for the 21st century.

Those who would minimise the importance of film, can point out its primary purpose is to make money. This has become increasingly true in the last several decades as studios have assumed greater power. It used to be common for auteurs like Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, and Robert Altman to make modestly budgeted films that earned decent returns. The advent of blockbuster films generally and superhero movies in particular makes it much harder for studios catering to their shareholders to justify anything other than tentpole franchises. The artistic merits of these big movies tend to be low as they are often made by committee and strive only for escapism and fan service.

However, film has clearly overtaken other forms of art in the popular imagination. Hundreds of years ago, composers, playwrights, novelists, and painters were held in higher esteem and their works were the centre of popular culture. Music and film have now displaced them. Someone who would have become a great writer in the 19th century, would now opt to make films as they can reach the greatest number of people and the medium is newer and more open to possibility. A good example of this would be a young filmmaker like P.T. Anderson who creates thoughtful, explorative works that also have a degree of mass appeal.

In conclusion, film as an art form is ascendant today. It is, however, still important for audiences to tune in to a wide breadth of genres in order to encourage the film industry to remain vibrant and innovative.

Word count: 309

There are severe social consequences to housing shortages in cities and only the government can solve these problems.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Real IELTS Exam/Test

Many people today feel that limited housing in urban areas can only be seriously addressed by governmental action. In my opinion, private investiture in this area will always be low so governments bear the burden of responsibility.

Only limited support for housing problems will come from the private sector. Large real estate and construction firms are mainly motivated to generate the greatest profits and will therefore largely cater projects towards a wealthy clientele. This means building large apartments and homes that likely replace smaller homes, exacerbating any existing housing crisis. In New York City, for example, ambitious developers knocked down government housing projects and built luxury apartments and brownstone homes. These efforts push poor residents out of the city and further away from their work and engender a variety of social problems.

The only realistic solution for housing shortages in major urban areas is governmental intervention. Governments can either build themselves or accept bids from construction companies. There are inspirational examples of public works projects in cities all around the world. The typical process is that the government will delineate an undeveloped or poorly planned area for new homes and accept bids from private companies. Since these areas are unavailable for unregulated commercial exploitation, the government holds power over the private companies. Once these projects are completed, they can house thousands of residents affordably, which allows occupants to find quality jobs in the city and eventually move out of these housing developments.

In conclusion, the government is the major catalyst in all housing solutions in cities. Governments ought to prioritise these efforts before cities become too gentrified and this hinders upwards social mobility.

Word count: 273

Watching a live performance such as a play, concert, or sporting event is more enjoyable than watching the same event on television.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Real Past IELTS Exam/Test

Many believe that watching live entertainment is better than watching it on television. In my opinion, though the experience of attending a performance in person can be exhilarating, television provides the best viewing experience these days.

Live performances are unique. A good example of this would in the sporting world. Most would jump at the chance to watch the greats of the game like Messi, Federer and Lebron ply their craft by attending one of their matches in person. The recorded versions of those events will last forever but there is a limited window to catch them in person. Experiencing the best players live highlights the speed, precision, and high-level talent required to dominate other professional athletes. This indelible memory of seeing a genius performing in person also applies to varying degrees for concerts, plays, and speeches.

Nonetheless, advances in broadcasting have elevated the home-viewing experience above the live version. The advent of HD televisions in the last two decades and the expansion of channels are the principle causes. These days, an individual watching a basketball game can hear play-by-play and colour commentary, see close-ups of the players, follow the action from the ideal view, and enjoy all this within the comforts of their own home. The memory may be less distinct but the experience itself is more enjoyable. This collective shift away from most major live events and towards home entertainment is evidenced in lower attendance numbers and ticket prices.

In conclusion, the best way to watch a live event is on television. There may be certain exceptions depending on the kind of event and how often it occurs but this holds true for most live performances.

Word count: 278

***Some people believe that smartphones are destroying social interaction today.
To what extent do you agree or disagree?***

Recent IELTS Exam/Test

Many today are of the belief that smartphones are injurious to social interaction. In my opinion, while smartphones can isolate individuals, their creative potential for communication overshadows this downside.

Those who argue against smartphones are typically wary of isolation. In the era before smartphones, it was more common for people to meet up at large social gatherings or see each other in person. This still happens today but it is less common because smartphones allow individuals to communicate and stay connected with their friends in the privacy of their own homes. It is entirely possible for a person today to stay home and completely eschew in person social interaction. Cases of these shut-ins have increased due to smartphones and this is also reflected in the number of services like Netflix and YouTube that cater to isolated consumers.

However, proponents of smartphones can rightly point out their functionality. This is evidenced daily in messaging apps like Facebook Messenger and WeChat. It is easy to set up group chats to message, share links, gifs and video for co-workers, family, old classmates, and various subsets of friends. This type of instant, infinitely flexible communication was impossible in the past and the ability to share images and video allows people to be more creative and banter in new ways. Far from destroying social interaction, smartphones have expanded its scope, accessibility, and convenience.

In conclusion, smartphones are not destroying social interactions; they are helping it, in general. It is important to be mindful of both the drawbacks and the new possibilities for communication opening up due to advances in technology.

Word count: 265

Throughout history, male leaders have led us into violence and conflict. If a society is governed by female leaders it will be more peaceful.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

Real Past IELTS Exam/Test

Many are of the opinion the male inclination towards violence is the root of many international conflicts and societies ruled by women might be more peaceful. In my opinion, this is likely true.

The reason that some oppose this seemingly sexist viewpoint is based on past examples of female leaders. The sample size is much smaller but leaders like Margaret Thatcher, Cleopatra, Hilary Clinton, Condoleezza Rice, Queen Elisabeth I, Joan d'Arc and countless others have started, maintained, and escalated violent conflicts. There are very few examples of peaceful female leaders and those that exist can be matched proportionally with male leaders. The claim that women are more peaceful is not supported by historical evidence. A major caveat is that these are the exceptions and women rulers have held power in a world otherwise dominated by male hierarchy. It is impossible to know how peaceful the world would be if women held the majority of powerful positions.

Furthermore, men are naturally predisposed towards aggression. This stems from both biology and society. Men produce more testosterone than women and this has been shown to increase aggressive tendencies and violent behaviour. Men can curb this instinct but it has the potential to undermine their better nature at any moment. There are also societal forces at work that play on men's pride. From a young age, boys are raised to be tough, to not back down, to not compromise and to idealise violent heroes. The majority of male role models are violent, ranging from historic figures to action stars and even videogame characters. It is hard to disentangle the roles of nature and nurture clearly but the end product of their combination is clear for both males and females.

In conclusion, males are more violent and women would likely be more peaceful given the opportunity to rule widely. The question of the desirability of ending all conflicts and its global impact is another matter.

Word count: 320

Some believe that history has little to teach us about today while others think that the study of the past helps us to understand the present.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Recent Past IELTS Exam/Test

Many feel that the study of the past does little to inform the present while others believe it can help aid understanding. In my opinion, history certainly holds insights but they are so deeply woven into a specific context so as to be as misleading as enlightening.

Those who argue in favour of learning from history can point to the importance of understanding a culture. A frequently cited example of this is the war between Vietnam and the United States in the mid 1960s to early 1970s. Both before and during the war, the United States President and his advisors understood little about the history of Vietnam with its successive invasions from foreign nations including China and Japan. A deeper understanding of the unity and resilience of Vietnam might have led them to make different decisions regarding splitting the country in half and the escalation of ground troops. Mistakes born of ignorance take place all the time in international relations and even domestic politics.

Regardless, history only holds lessons for the keenest observers. Every historical moment passes through a complex set of circumstances, many of which are hidden from history books, and cannot be reduced to simple lessons. For example, the Vietnam war is often summed up with the platitude that it is impossible to invade and occupy a foreign nation. This ignores the myriad reasons that led to defeat and supposes that other conflicts are identical. After the invasion of Iraq proved to be a quagmire, many relished the historical lessons of Vietnam without considering the very diverse set of circumstances that led to failure in each country. There are certainly insights to be gained from studying past conflicts, but they will rarely result in fixed, black and white rules applicable to every new situation.

In conclusion, history is not a simple road map for the future. Those who are too avid to accept seemingly apparent lessons are doomed to lead themselves astray and make new mistakes.

Word count: 328

More and more students at university today are not choosing to study science.

Why is this happening?

What are the effects of this?

Real Past IELTS Exam/Test

Fewer undergraduates today than ever before are opting to pursue careers in science. This is because business related subjects offer greater financial security and this will result in less overall talent in scientific fields.

The main reason that science majors are dwindling is the lure of business. Studying a scientific subject such as biology or chemistry requires intense specification, long hours in labs, and unstable future career options. Business related majors, on the other hand, are guaranteed an easier path to a good salary and the esteem of others. Good evidence of this comes in the form of all the majors related to commerce rapidly growing in popularity including marketing, finance, corporate law, banking, and economics. Parents often put pressure on their children to major in these subjects to secure a minimum level of financial success and raise the ceiling on future earning potential.

The impact will be felt in an overall decrease of talent in science. In the past, science tended to attract the best and brightest students who saw it as a path to personal wealth, glory and the public good. A good example of this is in the decades leading up to World War 2 when advances in medicine and technology of bright individuals like Marie Curie, Alexander Fleming, and Albert Einstein made them immortal role models. Today, our role models are more likely to be businessmen of a sort such as Steve Jobs, Warren Buffet, and Donald Trump. This is not only evidence of the societal shift but also portends fewer great figures in science going forward.

In conclusion, business has siphoned off potential science majors and this will result in fewer high quality scientists. It is important to highlight the achievements of scientists and denigrate businessmen in order to curb this alarming trend.

Word count: 298

Many people believe that music is just a form of entertainment, whilst others believe that music has a much larger impact on society today.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Real Past IELTS Exam/Test

There are those who claim that music is solely for entertainment purposes while others feel it has larger societal implications. In my opinion, ostensibly most people listen to music for fun, however it still opens up pathways for fringe elements of society to become mainstream.

Those that argue for the narrower view of music can easily highlight the ways in which music is consumed today. People listen to music at parties, nightclubs, and weddings to dance and enjoy themselves. They listen using streaming services like YouTube, Apple Music and Spotify to relax throughout the average day. The end result of all that listening is not that individuals think deeply about the lyrics or in any way question their actions, attitudes, or prejudices. More so than narrative forms of entertainment like movies and books, music is almost purely for entertainment and rarely rises above the level of subconscious enjoyment.

While there is some truth to the argument above, music turns a positive spotlight on previously underrepresented demographic groups. People do not simply listen to music; they are also apt to follow and admire their favourite artists. One of the best examples of this is the championing of LGBT lifestyles. Elton John was an early example of an artist whose sexuality was fluid at a time when many viewed this behaviour as deviant. He did not come out as gay until much later but his influence on aspiring artists and the average listener was immense. Today, there are many artists who are openly gay and this not only reduces bigotry in general by undermining its logic but also inspires others to come out. A person listening to and following artists in any genre today accepts these once alternative lifestyles as the norm.

In conclusion, music has an important role to play in society by giving voice to previously silent groups. In the same way that music broke down racial barriers in the 20th century, the 21st century will be the century of inclusion.

Word count: 330

Some people argue that job satisfaction is more important than job security, while others believe that they cannot always expect job satisfaction and a permanent job is more important.

Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.

Real Past IELTS Exam/Test

Some make the pragmatic argument that in an uncertain job market, security ought to be valued over satisfaction. In my opinion, those with families cannot be reproached for this view but it is generally more important to enjoy your job and spread goodwill.

Workers with dependents rightly value a consistent paycheck and benefits over all other factors. If someone is just starting out in a labour of love such as becoming an artist, they may struggle initially to bring home enough money to make ends meet every month. They might not be able to send their children to good schools, live in a good neighborhood, and keep everyone in the house reasonably well clothed and fed. Even if they can manage that, it will place incredible mental stress on not only them but also their spouse and children. Research has shown these deeply ingrained anxieties from childhood can persist throughout adulthood.

It is nonetheless more important to pursue a job that is fulfilling. The vast majority of the world dislikes their job and a large percentage of these people have difficulty reconciling their frustrations with their day-to-day temperament. An unhappy employee is more likely to be short with co-workers, complain to friends, and resent their family for the burden they must shoulder for their welfare. More of this persons daily interactions will be negative and this adds up over years to create the greatest global repository of ill will. Free up the same person to enjoy their job and there is a strong chance they will suddenly brighten the days of those around them.

Overall, fomenting good humour is more important and only in very rare family situations should an individual persist in a job for its stability. Many recognise this once it is too late and they already have an expensive lifestyle to maintain or their best working years are behind them.

Word count: 313

Watching TV shows and movies about crime is becoming more and more popular.

Why is this?

What effect does that have on society?

Real Past IELTS Exam/Test

The frenzy over crime shows in recent years has led many to question both the origins of this morbid interest and its impact. In my opinion, people watch these shows to dispel or safely confirm psychological similarities with killers and the result for society will be negligible in most cases.

The reason people watch crime shows is to understand and compare the psychology of killers. The mystery of these shows goes deeper than figuring out which suspect is the real perpetrator. Audiences are chiefly concerned with motive and the best shows analyse compelling, complex personality archetypes. People can then try to parse out whether or not these individuals are driven by human nature and are just expressing their desires differently from law-abiding citizens or if they are qualitatively different from the average person. Some watch to try to unequivocally differentiate themselves while others experience a guilty, unconscious pleasure in identification and vicarious living.

The end result of all these shows related to crime will amount to nothing in the final analysis. There will be some exceptions where individuals develop an unhealthy obsession that isolates them from normal society or claim them as excuses for their own crimes but this is just as likely to occur with any form of entertainment. The majority of people watch these shows, think about them and talk about them just as they discuss a book or a sports team. Research has been unable to show any direct link between watching crime shows and committing crimes or altering one's outlook towards others. Similarly, they will not have a positive impact since most people do not watch them to get tips to avoid criminals and the sample sizes for the crimes taking place are too small relative to the knowledge gained.

In conclusion, people watch crime shows to exonerate or convict themselves and it is a benign obsession. It is more important for psychologists to examine the drive to fascination than its object.

Word count: 326

Some believe technology has made our lives too complex and the solution is to lead a simpler life without technology.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Real Past IELTS Tests

Many are of the opinion that technology has done more harm than good and we ought to simplify in order to lead more fulfilling lives. I agree that technology has its drawbacks but I think turning away from technology is impractical.

The main reason that technology has complicated life for people today is that it has made people perpetually available. In the past, a worker might work a 9 to 5 then come home to spend time with their family, have dinner and enjoy their private life. That simplicity is largely no longer the case. Once work ends, you can still get email notifications and phone calls from managers or co-workers. The end result is that you can never be fully present in the moment because work always threatens to pull you back.

Although life has become more complicated and this is a negative development, shutting yourself off from technology would only serve to isolate people from the world. If you want to stay in touch with friends and know about events in your area, it is essential to have a phone. You can use Facebook Messenger to cheaply chat with individuals or make group plans. Email is an indispensable element of nearly every job. Without it, you are filtering out quality jobs and predetermining manual work as your vocation.

In conclusion, although technology has hurt people, turning away from it is not feasible today without making drastic sacrifices. Instead, people ought to seek ways to compartmentalise technology in order to live happier, more satisfying lives.

Word count: 256

Some think that ambition is a good quality.

Is it important to be ambitious?

Is it a positive or negative characteristic?

Real Past IELTS Exams/Tests

The rise of the one percent and accumulated capital has led many people today to question the basic value of raw ambition. In my opinion, though ambition has historical importance, it is a largely negative trait for most of society today.

Ambition's value lies in pushing forward human progress. Some of the best evidence of this comes from advances in science. Galileo was a determined astronomer, willing to doubt ingrained dogma in order to propagate his heretical view and we owe the basis of our understanding of the planetary system to him. A more recent example would be discoveries like penicillin and vaccines in the 20th century that were all the result of highly ambitious, driven individuals whose legacies endure to this day. Without their aspirations, human civilisation would have stagnated.

However, ambition for its own sake hurts society. When ambition is severed from passion and ethics, it becomes the raw engine of political and economic greed. A good example of this would be the rampant speculation fueling Wall Street. Most employees at large brokerage firms are ambitious in terms of moving up the ladder and making more money for their clients but have little concern for the consequences of their actions. Reckless investment spurred on by greed was one of the underlying causes of the sub-prime mortgage scandal that led to a global financial crisis in 2008 during which millions of homeowners and investors lost their retirement savings. Unchecked, ambition will always tend towards excess and society will always be left to reckon with the aftermath.

In conclusion, ambition is a crucial drive behind human civilisation but it is not a positive force on its own. It is important for parents and educators to serve as good role models to inspire children to check ambition with conscience.

Word count: 298

Online shopping is becoming more common these days.

What effect could this have on the environment and the types of jobs required?

Real Past IELTS Tests/Exams

The ubiquity of online shopping has brought with it concerns about the environment and an evolving job market. In my opinion, online shopping increases fossil fuel emissions and requires a massive, unskilled workforce for both delivery and production.

Online shopping uses fossil fuels in the making and transportation of goods. In order to manufacture a given product, such as a television, book, or bag of muesli, there is an environmental cost from sourcing and transporting all the elements, powering the factory that assembles it, and creating the plastic packaging, which is also a petroleum byproduct. In the case of a large company like Amazon, the product must be driven or flown to various centres around the country in order to be available for next day delivery. From the storage warehouse, it is then driven or flown to the consumer who ordered it, further burning fossil fuels. The net impact on the environment is self-evidently massive and hastens climate change.

Moreover, online shopping is such a sprawling business that it manipulates the labour market. First of all, there are the workers directly involved. Deliverymen must pack, unpack and ship products while the whole operation also requires a variety of managers, foremen, and office workers. These workers are notoriously underpaid and exploited when working for the largest online retailers, who also streamline the means of production in order to offer the lowest prices. Instead of sourcing from local businesses, which would be slightly more expensive, they opt for large factories largely based in China that can cheaply and quickly produce standardised products. This requires an army of factory workers, working at low wages in unsafe conditions.

In conclusion, online shopping contributes greatly to climate change and has created deep fissures in the job market. Governments should regulate these companies before their rampant profit-driven efficiency has unforeseen social and political implications.

Word count: 308

Some think that governments should support retired people financially while others believe they should take care of themselves.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Real Past IELTS Tests/Exams

Many today have come to the conclusion that retired seniors should be supported by the government and not left to their own meagre resources. While I agree there are certain cases where governments are liable, citizens ought to be incentivised to handle their own finances.

The main reason many support a government backed retirement plan is the dire condition of many seniors. There are a number of possible causes deserving due attention. Some seniors are without family, others may be war veterans and have trouble finding work due to physical or psychological impairments, and still others may be victims of economic downturns. Without support they must fall on the mercy of society and will wind up at soup kitchens and seeking out chronic charity or even begging. Simply put, governments are their last refuge and in the best position to lend a helping hand.

Despite the rare instances mentioned above, nations ought to encourage ownership of one's own future. If all citizens knew the government would provide a decent retirement fund for them, they would have little incentive to work hard, save money and make wise investments. Governments deal with large sample sizes and, granted this would not happen with many responsible adults, it still poses a sizeable national risk. An analogous example of this is the way parents raise their children. They provide for them early on, much like how governments offer free schooling, but then children are expected to grow up and take responsibility for their own lives. Parents that coddle their children for too long end up spoiling them in the same way that a national retirement fund would deprive individuals of the opportunity to become self-reliant.

In conclusion, the advantages of a more self-assured, mature citizenry outweigh the odd unavoidable case of desperation. There should be a degree of balance to allow for these exceptions while still nurturing more life-affirming values.

Word count: 315

Some believe that people are naturally born as leaders while others feel that leadership skills can develop.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Many are of the view that leadership is innate, rather than cultivated through time and experience. In my opinion, leadership is largely developed rather than gifted.

Those who believe that there are naturally born leaders point out the character of a person as a fixed quantity. There are certain individuals who display a natural charisma and inimitable capacity for command. A recent example of this would be Barack Obama. He is a naturally eloquent, stately, physically imposing presence and perfectly walks a fine line between warmth and firmness. Researchers have long identified common natural characteristics of leadership such as height, a deep voice, a strong chin and natural grace of movement. These cannot be developed to a significant degree and therefore support the claim that leadership is intrinsic.

However, great leadership is more deliberate than spontaneous. There are countless examples of individuals possessing all the physical characteristics of leaders who fall well short of inspiring people. An instructive example of this is Steve Jobs. Early in his career he inspired people with his exceptional talent but that had its limits as he pushed and demeaned employees ultimately leading to his ouster from Apple. This humbling experience led him to soften the sharper edges of his personality in the ensuing decade by considering other viewpoints and giving up more control to competent employees. These learned traits served him well when he became CEO of Apple again and reached what many regard as the pinnacle of leadership.

In conclusion, though the endpoint may obscure the origins, all leaders must cultivate their hubris to become great leaders. The long-standing assumptions about leadership must be challenged in order to put in place better institutional practices to mold future pioneers of industry and politics.

Word count: 289

Some think that governments should tax unhealthy foods to encourage people to eat healthier.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Real Past IELTS Tests/Exams

Some think that heavy-handed governmental taxation is the only way to compel healthier eating. In my opinion, while this makes rational sense, its actual effectiveness is questionable.

Those that argue in favour of these taxes can point to a logical chain of suppositions. Though taxes on unhealthy foods are rare, there is the occasional mandated price hike for sugary drinks and fast food, smoking is an instructive corollary. Several decades after research showed that smoking causes cancer, governments were able to push through legislation to tax cigarettes heavily. The result was that those already addicted to smoking continued to smoke but many people did not pick up the habit to begin with. Proponents argue this would also be the case when it comes to foods known to cause cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer. Many would eat them despite higher prices but the next generation would become more health conscious and that would further trickle down to their children.

Though the above argument is well reasoned, people will still buy luxuries. There is strong evidence for this dating back centuries. After the war of independence from Britain, the newly formed United States instituted direly needed taxes on luxuries including whiskey and chocolate. The purpose of the taxes was to raise money, not to lower consumption of those products. The unpopular acts were internally vindicated when people continued to buy luxuries along the same growth trend, enabling them to increase the national budget. Even though cutting down on purely pleasurable products makes disinterested sense, people are more swayed by instant gratification than cold calculation.

In conclusion, taxes on unhealthy foods would not be an effective measure against their consumption. Instead, governments should invest more in healthy school lunches and making healthy products more widely available to attack the problem at its root source.

Word count: 301

***Nowadays more tasks at home and work are being performed by robots.
Is this a negative or positive development?***

Real Past IELTS Tests/Exams

It is becoming increasingly common for homeowners and businesses to use robots to deal with daily tasks. I believe this trend is wholly positive because it saves individuals time and allows businesses to better allocate resources.

Those who use various advances in robotics in the home have more free time. Fully humanoid robots are rare but more and more families now use robotic vacuums such as the Roomba, mobile webcams for security surveillance, lawn care machines and devices that bridge the gap between robotics and artificial intelligence like Amazon Alexa and Google Home to make life easier. These devices save a lot of time for their users that can be better invested in hobbies, exercise, family, entertainment, and spending time with your significant other.

In the past, a sizeable percentage of operating budgets went to labour but as this number begins to dwindle we will see a concomitant rise in investiture in areas like research and development. Large companies such as Amazon, Google, Apple and automobile manufacturers can now invest in developing artificial intelligence, improving existing products, making safer cars, and so on. Over time, these benefits will add up to hasten both the pace of technological development and the speed with which new advances reach consumers. Robots will replace jobs reliant on manual labour and divert those wasted dollars to more important, creative areas that elevate human endeavours.

The large scale adoption of robotics bodes well for the future as it will streamline both home and work. There are looming risks related to massive unemployment but these can be mitigated with governmental regulation and by encouraging ethical corporate practices.

Word count: 270

***As well as making money, businesses also have a responsibility towards society.
To what extent do you agree or disagree?***

Real Past IELTS Test/Exam

Many socially conscious public figures have called on businesses to show greater responsibility to the societies they depend on. In my opinion, the responsibility of a business towards society extends to ethical management of their own operations but not to areas largely outside their purview.

Large and small businesses are no different from individuals and have the same obligation to be ethical. Every business, conducting themselves in a just manner, will contribute greatly to the betterment of society. A local grocery shop that pays its workers a living wage, charges fair prices, keeps accurate books, and sells quality food taken in the aggregate with stores around the country, produces innumerable benefits for both staff and patrons. Large companies are no exception. If Apple pays employees well and builds quality products while adhering to environmental and economic regulations, they make the world a better place. In contrast, companies without moral compass like Enron, Purdue and Facebook exact a heavy toll on society in exchange for their services.

However, companies should not be forced to take responsibility for greater societal ills unless they are in some way culpable. A good example of this relates to education. The education of children and adolescents is the foundation of a stable, content society. Responsibility for education lies squarely with governments and parents, notwithstanding some private enterprise schools. If a company comes in direct contact with a school, for example by selling them textbooks, then the company is responsible for the quality of their products. If they pollute nearby land and students get sick, the company should bear full responsibility as well. In all other matters not under their direct influence, parents and governments take on the sole burden of care.

In conclusion, businesses are only in contact with certain aspects of society and they should not be asked to assume a full burden of responsibility. As free market companies become larger and supplant national governments this may require re-examination.

Word count: 325

The use of social media is replacing face-to-face interaction among many people in society.

Do you think the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?

Real Past IELTS Test/Exam

Many people today believe that social media has largely supplanted traditional face-to-face interpersonal relationships, leading to worsening communication skills. I fully agree with this point of view though I concede the advantages of social media for entrepreneurs.

Social media has been a boon for anyone interested in starting their own business. In the past, if someone wanted to start a business the avenues were more limited and likely presupposed some inherited capital. Social media, beginning with Facebook and now being brought to fruition with apps like Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok, opens up possibilities for content creators to communicate with their audience around the world. This applies to larger than life success stories like Justin Bieber, who went viral and rose from relative obscurity to global stardom, as well as more modest examples like the various Instagram artists and models who interact and generate income and publicity from their loyal fan bases.

Despite the aforementioned advantages, social media has degraded the general quality of communication. Those most affected are young users. In school, children and teenagers must develop their interpersonal skills by telling jokes, engaging in playful banter, and arguing about personal and political topics. Over time, some people distinguish themselves as great storytellers or compelling speakers while others at least improve their communication skills. In contrast, young people today are more likely to communicate by texting and interacting through fleeting comments as they impatiently scroll through their various feeds. They do not get quality feedback on their output and so develop haphazardly, not knowing whether or not their jokes and points ever really connect.

In conclusion, social media has hurt communication, overshadowing all its economic utility. Parents ought to limit phone use for children and themselves in order to fight the rising influence of technology that humanity is not evolved enough to deal with responsibly.

Word count: 305

Some believe that tourism does more to create tension between countries rather than helping individuals better understand other cultures.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Reported IELTS Exam on February 8th

Many people are of the belief that rather than easing tensions, tourism actually further strains relations between countries. In my opinion, despite some newsworthy incidents, the vast majority of tourist interactions are positive.

The reason that many have turned against tourism as a means of soft power is the memorable disputes that naturally arise. A good example of this would be the recent outbreak of Coronavirus in China and the resultant worldwide panic. Chinese tourists have since reported on social media channels increased harassment and chilly treatment abroad. Such reactions are irrational because Coronavirus is a tame threat relative to normal strains of influenza, various diseases and other fatalities over the period including vehicular deaths. This psychological bias applies to small-scale tourist interactions as well: people are more likely to remember recent, negative events even if their actual impact is marginal.

The overwhelming majority of interactions between tourist and local are friendly and conducive to increased understanding. The average person taking a trip, to most countries, will encounter friendly customs officials, chat amiably with their taxi driver on the way to their hotel, where the staff will likely be very accommodating. The negative interactions are rare though they may stick out and make memorable stories. The more common scenario is that a tourist's curiosity will be matched by local enthusiasm to make a good impression of themselves and their country. These complimentary human drives from the tourist and local, re-enacted in millions of micro-interactions daily, may not make headlines but they foster empathy and understanding between otherwise diverse cultures.

In conclusion, the cumulative impact of friendly encounters engendered by tourism far outweigh exaggerated slights. People should keep this in perspective when travelling and rise above prejudice and confirmation bias.

Word count: 289

Too much money is wasted on repairing old buildings that should be used to knock them down and build new ones.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Real Past IELTS Tests

Many people today claim that too much money is being allocated to the upkeep of older buildings that would be better utilised on modern infrastructure. In my opinion, though new buildings are more practical, old buildings are indispensable cultural relics.

Progressive supporters of modernity rationally point out the actual utility of a building should be the priority. A good example of this would be in cities that have developed substantially in the last half century such as Kolkata, India. Rapid economic development there has overtaken sentimentality over both pre and post-Colonial architecture. It is commonplace for old buildings that no longer meet today's safety standards to be bulldozed to build hospitals, hotels, restaurants, and offices. All these new buildings serve vital functions in a 21st century metropolis and are not merely for show, as the buildings relegated for demolition are.

Despite the above justifications, old buildings serve to maintain the irreplaceable cultural identity of a city. While cities like Kolkata and Beijing have ruthlessly swept aside the past in favour of an inevitable future, smaller cities like Chiang Mai in Thailand have managed to protect the majority of their historic buildings. The result is more than just tourist attractions like classic homes, old city walls and ancient pagodas. The residents of Chiang Mai, and other citizens of Thailand, can visit and be reminded of the beauty and resilience of their ancestors. In Beijing, the disdain for history encourages the nation at large to imitate the stubborn pursuit of progress characteristic of the 21st century.

In conclusion, old buildings ought to be preserved as they are important for a nation's cultural identity. The governments that adopt this long-term, multifaceted view will reap the rewards of a more unified national citizenry.

Word count: 289

Plagiarism in academics has become a pressing problem in many countries today.

What are the causes of this problem?

What are some possible solutions?

Real Past IELTS Tests/Exams

Plagiarism has become a serious issue in academic circles in recent decades. The main causes of this center around the dissemination of information to countries with varying attitudes to intellectual property rights and the solutions are strict censures of plagiarised works.

In many countries, plagiarism is not considered an offence or treated very lightly. For example, students in Vietnam grow up in an environment where copyright is largely just for show. It is common practice for photocopy shops to print or copy entire books with no legal repercussions. In school, many students are instructed to memorise and reproduce the works of others and prohibited from coming up with their own ideas. The rise of Facebook, which hardly polices IP rights, has led to further lawlessness. Altogether, theft is culturally permitted if not encouraged. Countries around the world all have differing standards based on their history, culture, and legal frameworks.

The best solutions for plagiarism are to implement degrees of punishments. Those who outright copy and paste works and pass them off as their own for commercial purposes should be subject to full criminal and civil prosecution. This will limit the most extreme cases. Sharing and posting materials on the internet is a thornier issue because the perpetrators do not always receive direct financial benefit and can be difficult to track down. In these cases, it is the websites, such as Facebook, that must police members and initiate warnings and bans to repeat offenders.

In conclusion, the pertinent threat of plagiarism means both companies and countries must work in tandem to limit any potential damage. In the future, this issue will only become more difficult to extricate so it is advisable that preventive measures be put in place now.

Word count: 288

Nowadays, entertainers get paid more than politicians.

What are the reasons for this?

Is this a negative or positive development?

Real Past IELTS Tests/Exams

These days entertainers invariably earn higher wages than politicians. In my opinion, this is the result of technological growth in the entertainment industry and it is a positive development because politics should not be a means to amass a fortune.

Entertainment is one of the most lucrative industries today largely due to developments in media distribution. Vaudeville actors and musicians in the early 20th century were looked down on and earned little. The birth of cinema in the 1920s and the rise of television in the 1950s allowed entertainers to reach a wider audience. From there the rise has continued not only with the diversification of television but also the invention of CDs, portable music players, the internet, and streaming websites like Netflix and YouTube. All this new media reaches the majority of the world's population who then pay for the content by subscribing or watching paid advertisements.

This is a positive development because politics should not be a profit driven profession. A good example of this would be the early American founding fathers, including Alexander Hamilton and George Washington, both of whom sacrificed private wealth for public service. Hamilton was the leading lawyer in New York and when he enthusiastically joined Washington's cabinet he took a drastic cut in salary. By the end of his term, he was mired in debt but had no regrets as he viewed public political action as far more valuable than private capital. Politicians ought to earn a good salary but this should never subvert their chief motive in serving their country.

In conclusion, entertainers make more money due to the advent of the media age and politicians should not be jealous of their wealth. Unfortunately, many politicians are selfishly compelled by economic gain when they ought to be more self-interested in terms of their role in public life.

Word count: 305

More and more people today are drinking sugar-based drinks.

What are the reasons for this?

What are the solutions?

Real Past IELTS Exams/Tests

Health experts have warned against a rise in addictions to sugary drinks and the concomitant risks. In my opinion, this is due to both advertising and encroachment in developing markets and the solution is to enact various restrictions.

Over-consumption of sugary drinks can be directly attributed to advertising and opening up vulnerable new markets. In much of the developed world, people are becoming more health conscious and while consumption may increase as a total number, it is more likely to decline as a proportion. This is not the case in the developing world in countries such as Vietnam. A burgeoning middle-class in the last two decades coupled with unregulated ad campaigns from Pepsi and Coca Cola have led to a pandemic of sugary drinks in the market. Consumers now have more disposable income and are generally less educated about the long-term effects of sugar while companies are eager to exploit these facts to fatten their bottom line.

The only proven solutions for any public health crisis are regulation. One of the most famously successful laws in this area was the ban on large sugary drinks in New York City. It prohibited only the largest sizes but had a large impact before it was ultimately repealed due to corporate lobbying. In its place, many states including New York and California enacted taxes that have driven up the cost of sugar-heavy drinks. The result is that fewer people are willing to take on the associated health risks given the higher prices. If federal governments tax these drinks similarly to cigarettes, then their popularity will decline even faster.

In conclusion, the ubiquity of sugary drinks is down to exploitation of developing nations and can be curbed through thoughtful regulation. Governments that take firm, unpopular steps towards these reforms will later save money in medical care.

Word count: 302

Many people feel that students should learn from online materials while others feel that it is better to use printed materials.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Real Past IELTS Tests

There have been recent calls for schools to phase out printed materials and take better advantage of online resources. Although printed materials enable important cognitive returns, schools should adopt online materials almost exclusively to protect the environment.

Printed materials encourage children to develop good thinking habits. Children and teenagers will of course spend an outsized amount of time on the internet, through smartphones and computers, as they grow up. This not only impacts their attention span and brain chemistry but also makes them susceptible to worryingly unreliable online information. Printed materials, on the other hand, are written by well-regarded authors, thoroughly researched, and students cannot get distracted by the lures of the internet while reading a physical book.

Nonetheless, online materials present an opportunity to protect the world's trees at a time when they are under great threat. Take the typical lifecycle of a school's coursebooks for example. Hundreds of students in a single grade are given a dozen books for various subjects every year. The books tend to be reused for several years but they later must be replaced with newer editions, necessitating more trees be cut down. Using online materials does not entail the same level of environmental costs. Textbooks can be easily updated and no trees have to be chopped down to create the devices in the first place. Over time, this will have a dramatic impact on tree populations around the globe and help mitigate the looming damage of climate change.

In conclusion, administrators should make every effort to replace the outdated medium of paper with their electronic equivalent. This is merely one step, but a still crucial one, in saving the earth from imminent catastrophe.

Word count: 280

Some people believe that it is good to share as much information as possible in scientific research, business, and the academic world. Others believe that some information is too important or too valuable to be shared freely. Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.

The question of how much information relevant to various areas of scientific and academic research should be shared is becoming more and more important as the pace of technological innovation quickens and the internet allows for instant collaboration. In my opinion, information is a valuable, potentially dangerous asset and should only be shared freely in particular circumstances.

Advocates of freely sharing information rightly argue that collaboration leads to faster results. This applies to scientists, who can help each other by offering their individual research results, businesses, which can work together as long as they are not competitors on advertising or product development, as well as academics, who need fresh perspectives to push their work to higher plateaus. Take for example the potential for sharing information in the business world. Google has built their successful advertising business by working together with various companies and sharing information. Google collects a variety of statistics related to users including their location and interests. This information is shared with advertisers who can then better target ads for users. It allows the consumer to see more relevant products and services and the companies advertising to target their audience more efficiently.

While there are decided advantages like the one mentioned above, information is still a valuable asset that individuals and companies should safeguard. In a perfect world, we might expect people to openly share everything they know but the social and economic constructions of our actual world make this a naive proposition. One interesting example of this is from a recent news article about Elon Musk where he explained why his rocket company SpaceX does not apply for patents on any new technology. He reasoned that his main competitors are governments, not private companies. If his company discloses its innovations then domestic and foreign governments can take advantage of the shared technology and potentially disrupt his business. This is just one example of how sharing can prove damaging in a capitalist society.

In conclusion, though sharing might be a valid standpoint in a perfect world, it is not feasible under current global conditions. Instead of looking to increase sharing, governments should do more to support innovative companies and researchers. This will have a larger overall impact.

Word count: 368

Nowadays because of digital technology it is possible for not only studios but also individuals to produce their own films.

Do you think this is a positive or negative development?

Real Past IELTS Tests January 18th 2020

The democratisation of film has led to greater opportunity as well as fears as to the future of filmmaking. In my opinion, this is a largely positive development as it opens up the medium for a more diverse range of socioeconomic voices.

The main reason that film purists resist the digital revolution is it brings down the quality of films. A good example of this is when digital film first burst onto the scene and started to replace film around the turn of the century. The initial complaints from viewers were that film looks better and digitally shot movies have a cheap aesthetic akin to a soap opera. As digital film has proliferated beyond studios looking to cut costs, it has exponentially increased the number of films made by amateurs. This naturally leads to movies with bad acting, clumsily written dialogue and poor overall production values.

Despite the admitted cons listed above, digital film has given a voice to less wealthy filmmakers who tend to be of a different class and ethnicity. There are countless examples of students who film digitally, post their video on YouTube and become internet sensations. Many of these new perspectives are outside of the predominantly white, male, heterosexual homogeneity of Hollywood. It is increasingly possible for LGBT themes to surface in these shorts and for ethnic minorities around the world to break through. The most striking evidence is simply comparing the major movies made 50 years ago with the diverse range of cinema on offer today.

In conclusion, although there are drawbacks in terms of quality those are mitigated by novel themes from underrepresented demographics. Studios should pay heed and relax their control over an ever-promising industry.

Word count: 282

Some people think that paying taxes is their only responsibility towards society while others feel that everyone should do more.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Real Past IELTS Tests

Many are of the opinion that taxpayers are fulfilling their obligations to society at large while others feel that responsibility extends beyond a financial contribution to the government. In my opinion, paying taxes greatly helps fund social programs but individuals have little choice but to do more if they also want to think highly of themselves.

The main reason that many see taxes as enough are the far reaching impact of tax dollars. Take some well-run European socialist countries such as France for example. In France, there are social welfare programs underpinning their progressive society such as maternity leave for new mothers, world renowned unemployment benefits, top notch schools, not to mention more basic services like police, fire, and infrastructure maintenance. These are the direct result of taxes and though their net effect varies by implementation in various countries, they are clearly the foundation of stable societies globally.

Despite the discernible impact of taxes, individuals are responsible for their daily decisions related to society. Every job will touch on, with varying degrees of strength, society. A doctor who takes his job seriously, rather than simply trying to push new drugs or unnecessary tests to drive up premiums, helps families in their most dire situations. Even a cashier has a role to play. They can do their job responsibly with a positive attitude and send out other people into society with a good impression or contribute to the rising tide of cynicism in today's culture. These actions are unavoidable and anyone who feels the need to think of themselves as a good person has no choice but to take up a larger role in making society a better place to live.

In conclusion, though taxes are part of what a person owes to society, they will necessarily also have a positive or negative day to day impact. People should rightly see their contributions as essentially self-interested excuses to feel good about themselves.

Word count: 320

Some people believe that education is the key to tackling hunger worldwide while others feel that the answer is in food aid.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Real Past IELTS Tests

Many feel that education is the best way to tackle hunger while others feel that immediate food aid is a better solution. As far as I'm concerned, education is clearly the better long-term remedy.

Many charities are active in food aid efforts because of its clear impact in emergency situations. A good example of this would be famines in a sub-Saharan African nations. These are caused by unpredictable weather conditions and coupled with governmental instability can result in mass malnutrition and even death. It is impossible to deal with the sources of these famines over time but food aid addresses its symptoms and keeps actual people alive now. The tangible results of this kind of aid are the strongest arguments in its favour.

Although the above mentioned methods are appropriate in emergencies, they do little to disrupt the underlying causes of hunger. If people are better educated then they can get better jobs and hunger disappears as a problem. There may be other relevant economic realities, such as the unemployment rate, that need addressing but education will still go a long way to eradicating hunger. Education can also help in regions that are prone to hunger as farmers will be able to develop better agricultural methods. Simply put, if citizens have good jobs, there is little real threat of hunger even under exceptional circumstances.

In conclusion, although food aid has its use, I feel education is a clearly better option. Governments ought to divert more resources into education to see world hunger ended over the course of the next century.

Word count: 260

Many believe that the best way to ensure a happier society is to reduce the difference in income earnings between the rich and poor.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Real Past IELTS Exam/Test

Class distinctions are an intrinsic element of human relations but many today worry over the drastically widening gap between rich and poor. In my opinion, in order to have a happy society there must be a more equal distribution of income.

The main reason that these economic reforms would make society happier is by diffusing personal frustrations. The less wealthy often feel resentful and insecure about their place in life. This has a number of symptoms ranging from relatively benign unhappiness to deep depression, and takes a collective toll on individuals, families and societies. In the most extreme examples, mass shootings in the United States are invariably undertaken by poor, white males who feel left behind economically. The net impact of lifting people out of poverty would be a boon to everyday families as well as society at large.

Furthermore, if people no longer had to stress and work themselves to the bone to make ends meet, new outlets to contribute more to society would open up. They could volunteer for a charity, if they have an altruistic bent, take up an art, spend more time being a dedicated family member, or even set aside time to try to innovate in their vocation. Small-scale parallels for this exist already in the form of scholarships given to underprivileged students who are then able to get degrees and contribute across a variety of disciplines to making society happier in general.

In conclusion, there is little doubt that in the 21st century income inequality has reached a level that causes extreme unrest among the general population and distributing capital more evenly would remedy this. Countries ought to look closely at recent proposals for a universal basic income.

Word count: 284

Most agree that we should be training children to recycle waste to preserve the Earth's natural resources. However, some believe that it is parents who should teach their children to recycle waste while others feel schools are more responsible. Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Real IELTS Past Tests

The general sentiment in most quarters is that recycling is an integral part of combatting climate change and most debate now circles around whether parents or teachers should be most responsible. In my opinion, schools reach the largest number of children overall.

Many believe that instilling values is a parental right. Parents have the basic right to influence their children according to their own beliefs. For example, a Muslim living in a Christian country will likely still follow many Islamic traditions. Even if the child learns implicitly or explicitly about Judeo-Christian tenets in school, the parents have a right to raise their child in the manner they think is most culturally fitting. This also applies to recycling, though it is hardly a matter of subjective belief to most informed citizens today.

Despite the rare potential parents who may be against recycling, schools should be where recycling is taught because government mandates will reach all children. There is simply no way to legislate every single family to make their children recycle but this can be easily enacted in schools. A good example of this would be in Japan where school children take an active role in cleaning and separating their own rubbish for recycling. Not only does this make a huge difference in itself but it is also a nationally comprehensive approach to fostering life-long environmentally conscious habits across an entire generation.

In conclusion, schools are more likely to have a larger impact on recycling habits and therefore this is their responsibility. Governments ought to make recycling one of their top educational priorities in the future as part of a cohesive plan to better the environment.

Word count: 277

Students should be primarily taught academic subjects so that they can pass exams, and practical skills such as cooking should not be taught.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Real Past IELTS Tests

Many educators today feel pressure to teach to the test and emphasise academic subjects over more practical ones. In my opinion, this approach is overtly short-sighted and practical skills play an important role in a well-rounded education.

Those who support a singular focus on academics can point to its tangible outcome in higher test scores. A good example of this would be accelerating academic progress at inner city schools. There have been numerous reforms in the last several decades to help the poorest performing districts catch up. The results have been uneven at times but overall more students from impoverished or troubled backgrounds can now go to college, often being the first person in their family to do so. Passing exams has the very real benefit of giving them opportunities outside of menial work and, in the most extreme cases, crime.

Though there might be a case for overemphasis on academics in select districts, learning practical skills is an important part of becoming an all around person. Those who possess certain skills, such as a sharp memory and logical thinking, will perform better in academics like math and physics. This means that these skills are rewarded and may become over-developed at the expense of skills related to practical work such as spatial thinking and multi-tasking. Graduates who know how to please their teachers and get good grades in academic subjects will find themselves lacking in real world skills. Adding in practical skills goes a long way towards making this a reality.

In conclusion, the argument for academics only applies to niche segments of society and learning practical skills has tremendous benefits. Schools should find ways to balance both despite external pressure from the government and parents for the reductive measure of higher marks.

Word count: 293

Some people think that children should begin their formal education at a very early age. Some think they should begin at least 7 years old. Discuss both views give opinions.

Real Past IELTS Tests

There has been growing momentum in recent years towards movements for children to start schooling after the age of 7. In my opinion, although going to school from a young age will help with social development, children should be allowed to grow outside school until the age of 7.

Proponents of early schooling often point out the clinical research on the impact of school on social skills. At home, children are exposed to a variety of different circumstances. They may or may not have siblings, their parents might take them out for playdates often or neglect them at home, hampering their social skills. Once children start school, they are all in more or less an equal environment where they must communicate with older and younger children, compromise when playing, learn to listen to their teachers, and start forming stable bonds based on empathy and shared interests with others.

Despite the social advantages, children can develop more uniquely if they are allowed to delay their entrance to formal schooling. A good example of this is in Finland, where students do not begin school until after the age of 7. Finland is renowned for its top-performing students but this can be traced to a number of factors besides simply school age. However, the impact on individual development is apparent. According to research into child psychology, children form the basis of their personality between the ages of 4 and 7. Therefore it is paramount to delay the age when they begin school in order to give them room to breath and ultimately produce a greater variety of voices in society at large as has been the case in Finland.

In my opinion, the social benefits of school do not outweigh the individual positives of delayed schooling to both the individual and society. Schools should continue to research this area so that they can better advise policymakers.

Word count: 313

Some people think that the news media has become much more influential in people's lives today and it is a negative development. Do you agree or disagree?

Real Past IELTS Test

It is commonly held that the news has become an invasive force in people's everyday lives. In my opinion, I completely disagree with this viewpoint because the news contributes greatly to the decision making process of discerning citizens.

Modern news media properly consumed improves its readership's ability to make quality decisions regarding their own interests. One standout example of this is the way that people follow political issues. In democratic countries, it is difficult to argue that there is anything more important than staying informed of political developments. When Americans learned about the harmful effects of global warming on our environment they began to advocate, through the ballot box and general public sentiment, for reforms. This has led to the election and overhaul of policies related to environmental conservation and is the direct result of information gleaned from experts on the news.

Some rightly argue that the news is not always trustworthy. Individuals and organisations are always attempting to twist the news to their advantage. A good example of this would be the recent rise of online news. Online news goes up immediately and is therefore much more likely to contain mistakes than news verified and published in newspapers. Retractions in newspapers are rarely read and they are almost unheard of for online news, despite their increasing frequency. This is a decided consequence of the way people consume news today but readers can avoid this by only trusting reputable sources like The New York Times or the BBC and not naively believing every article they happen across.

In conclusion, I believe that the merits of staying informed far outweigh any perceived drawbacks. People should take the time to find reliable news sources and vet the articles most pertinent to them.

Word count: 290

Many psychologists recommend that the best way to relieve stress is to do nothing at all for a period of time during the day.

Do you agree or disagree?

Real Past IELTS Tests

One of the most pressing issues for first world countries is how to reduce their stress levels and this has led some psychologists to propose a daily period of rest. Although I think that daily rest would be helpful, it is more important to take an active role in stress relief.

Proponents of a rest period suggest that taking a break has proven health benefits related to stress reduction. It is very common in Latin American countries and some Southeast Asian countries to take an afternoon 'siesta' or short nap before resuming work. Research has supported the myriad health benefits related to this stress-free period. It lowers blood pressure, increases serotonin in the brain, and aids memory function. Besides the statistics from studies that breaks reduce stress, there is also anecdotal evidence that taking a break energises people in both the short and long term. Plowing on without breaks, on the contrary, can lead to an increase in stress and has been linked to related health problems.

Instead of taking a rest, I believe that joining a team sport will do more to relieve stress. Doctors and scientists agree that exercise is the best way to cut down on stress overall. In most parts of the world, football is the most common sport both to watch and participate in. Playing football reduces your stress by releasing endorphins in the brain that make people happier, strengthening the heart to better withstand stressful situations, and helping people to relax by working in a team towards a shared goal. The teamwork aspect cannot be underestimated, and is integral to most sports, as it does more to reduce stress and reset your body for a new day than any other activity.

To conclude, although taking a rest certainly helps reduce stress, the best way to unwind is to play a sport. People should set aside time at least once a week to partake in team sporting activities.

Word count: 323

***People today often use the internet to learn about the culture of other countries. This means that it is not that important to travel to those countries.
To what extent do you agree or disagree?***

Real Past IELTS Tests

The fact that many people today use the internet to experience other countries means that it is no longer as important to actually travel to those nations. In my opinion, though travel has its benefits, this is largely true.

Proponents of travel often claim that real life experience trumps virtual experience. Compare, for instance, the recent Google Museum project which catalogues collections from famous museums in high resolution photos available to anyone with internet access. This is no doubt a positive development but it pales in comparison to the experience of walking through the Louvre and seeing the brushstrokes up close, going on a guided tour, and talking with other museum-goers. This holds true for a variety of experiences that are enhanced by being physically present in the moment.

Although there are good reasons to continue to travel on occasion, the internet allows people to access the majority of the experience remotely. The most salient example of this is the ubiquity of YouTube for internet users around the world. A child from an impoverished background, who still has internet access, probably cannot travel to other countries but they can watch travel documentaries, vlogs, and archived television shows that show cultures around the world. The makers of these videos not only bring their experience but also aggregate the most noteworthy events and individuals that even the most adventurous traveller would have difficulty finding the time to locate.

To conclude, travelling still plays a role in life but the internet has largely replaced its primary importance in life. There will come a time when the virtual world too fully overcomes the physical but for the moment it is still beneficial.

Word count: 278

The most common solution for criminal behaviour is prison but many believe education is a better method.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Real Past IELTS Tests

Many feel that instead of locking up criminals, we could better reduce crime by tackling systemic problems in our educational systems. In my opinion, although education is important, deterrence remains the primary inhibitor of criminality.

Many see education as a better remedy as it holds long-term promise. The main cause of crime is poverty and that can be linked directly to education. Take for example countries with strong educational systems. In Singapore, which has one of the most well-regarded school systems in the world, the majority of graduates can find well paid jobs and the crime rate is consequently among the lowest globally. There is no cause to commit a crime if you have enough money to provide for yourself and your family.

Despite the clear results education can bring about, deterrence remains the main reason why people do not commit crimes. If there was no threat of prison, people would feel free to steal, murder or commit whatever crime they choose. A good example of the effect of prison on crime is in countries with strict, mandatory sentencing guidelines. Many Southeast Asian countries have imposed severe sentences on drug related crimes to successfully curb drug trafficking and distribution. There is no substitute for the clearcut logic engendered by the threat of prison.

To sum up, despite the admitted benefits of education, the deterring effect of prison prevents most crime. Countries ought to invest in sustainable solutions such as education and economic reform while not neglecting the irreplaceable role of incarceration.

Word count: 251

Many museums charge for admission while others are free.

Do you think the advantages of charging people for admission to museums outweigh the disadvantages?

Real Past IELTS Tests

Many are of the belief that museums should be free to the public because of their enormous potential to educate while others feel charging money helps ensure the quality of the art therein. I concede the benefits of the latter argument but would still side with those who advocate free admissions.

The main reason that many are in support of charging money is that it sustains both the maintenance and quality of exhibitions. A good example of this would be the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City. MoMA is generally regarded as one of the finest museums in the world and is famous not only for its well-maintained facade but also the ever-rotating artworks on display. They charge a nominal entrance fee in the neighbourhood of \$20 a ticket and invest that money wisely to ensure a memorable experience for all museum-goers.

Despite the advantages for a private museum such as MoMA, I think making all museums free would encourage more people to appreciate art. A contrasting example with MoMA would be a museum just a few blocks away: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The MET has educated and uplifted millions of citizens regardless of their socioeconomic status. The wealthy who can afford museum admission are likely to already have a deep appreciation of the arts as well as the leisure time to enjoy their practice. People, and children especially, from poorer backgrounds have fewer opportunities and free museums is the best way to support appreciation of the arts *en masse*.

In conclusion, the benefits of free museum admissions, particularly for lower income families, outweigh the benefits of charging. The bigger issue is how governments and other organisations can budget free or relatively inexpensive museums.

Word count: 288

People have historically attempted to achieve a perfect society. However, it is difficult to decide what a perfect society would be like. What would be the most important element of an ideal society? What can normal people do to make society more perfect?

Real IELTS Essay Society

The best way to improve our society is a topic of understandable concern for all governments and citizens. In my opinion, the key to this is increased tolerance of difference and people can take the individual step of examining their own beliefs in order to not pass ingrained prejudices on to the next generation.

The most momentous shifts in society in the last centuries have involved progress related to tolerance of different types of people. The original pilgrims left England to found new colonies in order to have religious freedom to worship as they wish. Racism and slavery in the 19th century is a direct result of considering one group of people separate. The most recent example is the movement to be more accepting of a variety of sexualities. These have all made society more perfect and their evolution and nascent spread throughout the world will allow the greatest number of people to enjoy a full range of freedom and opportunity.

To achieve the more open society mentioned above, individuals can closely evaluate their beliefs and try to impart more tolerant values to the younger generation. A good example of this can be seen in the embrace of gay marriage by many in the last decade. In the 20th century, it was political suicide to support gay marriage. However, people began to question the rationale for denying this basic human right. Now most schools and parents teach their children about alternative lifestyles and it is much more common to see LGBT couples in popular culture. This is one step towards a utopian, inclusive society free of prejudice.

In conclusion, the movement to accept more diverse elements of society is already underway. With continued effort, it is reasonable to expect a generally positive attitude towards all people in the coming years, though this progressivism will vary widely from country to country.

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Word count: 323

Traffic and housing problems in major cities could be solved by moving companies, factories and their employees to the countryside. Do you agree or disagree?

Many people claim that moving companies, factories and their employees from cities to the countryside might ameliorate some of the worst traffic and housing issues. I strongly believe that this is a suitable solution for those two particular city problems.

Moving the facilities of major corporations to the countryside will reduce traffic problems by encouraging more people to live in the countryside for their work. It is widely known that more people live in cities today than ever before and this has caused terrible traffic. For example, in Beijing it is not uncommon for gridlocked motorways to delay motorists for hours. Travelers depend on getting in to Beijing for their livelihood but if their jobs were in the countryside, or a nearby suburb, they could live outside the city and reduce traffic. This would have a major impact on overcrowded cities like Beijing that lose billions of dollars a year because of time wasted in traffic jams, according to recent research.

Moving factories and employees to the countryside will also help to mitigate housing issues in cities. In many developing countries, the rush of people from the country to the city has necessitated the construction of massive skyscrapers. A lot of these underdeveloped cities such as Mexico City and Lagos do not have the sophisticated infrastructure including efficient plumbing, clean water and trash collection that is needed to service a concentrated population. By moving jobs and people to the countryside, developing countries will have more time to improve their infrastructure to deal with surging urban populations.

In conclusion, moving people to the countryside will help to reduce traffic and housing problems, especially in developing countries. If more governments studied this closely and enacted laws to encourage people to move, it would greatly improve the quality of life for everyone living in the city.

Word count: 303

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To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Real Past IELTS Tests

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